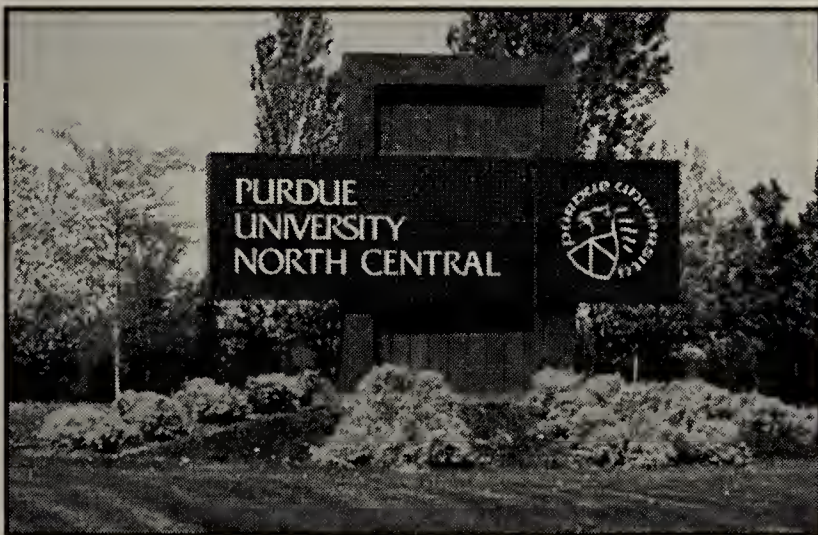




Portals

*"Writing ability is truly
the portal to success and
mutual understanding."*

*– June Bostich
first director of the
student writing contest*



*25th Anniversary Issue
1972-1996*

Portals

The Literary Journal
of
Purdue University North Central

25th Anniversary Issue
1996

The Purdue Barker Center, 1949-1967.



Foreword

“Writing ability is truly the portal to success and mutual understanding.” With these words, June Bostich, the first director of the student writing contest at Purdue University North Central, introduced *Portals*. This issue represents twenty-five years of continuous publication, a quarter century of the finest writing produced by students at Purdue University North Central. To celebrate this achievement, the editors present this retrospective issue. In addition to material drawn from this year’s writing contest, this issue of *Portals* takes a look at some of the best work published from 1972 through 1995. We should like to thank Chancellor Dale W. Alspaugh for his generous and continued support, Joy Banyas and Karen Prescott of the Publications Office, *The Spectator*, the judges of the writing contest. Many people, both students and faculty, have worked to realize this achievement. We salute their effort, for they have made this “portal to success and mutual understanding” possible for twenty-five years.

Dr. Vernon P. Loggins

Director of the Student Writing Contest and Editor of Portals

Student Editors:

Nancy Howell

Dawn Millsap

Denise Underwood-Martine

Michael Szymanski

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Dean Robert F. Schwarz (left) watches a morning flag ceremony, late 1960s.



Essays

Gwen Schilling

Rosella Fields

Dawn Millsap

Susan Wallace

Susan Wood

Kensey Alsman

Susan Henriott

Gwen Schilling

The permanent campus opened in September 1967.



Mauve Cloud In A Silver Lining

Enclosed in a tomb of silver, plastic and cardboard, the homogenized mixture of oils, wax, fat fragrance and hue waits dormant. It waits for resurrection—desiring to enhance, beautify, and caress its owner. How can this mass of slime and grease act as beautician? A simple purchase will reveal to the consumer the sensory and emotional qualities of a tube of lipstick.

When I purchase a new lipstick I have some needs that are unconsciously taken into account. I have the emotional need of belonging, or fitting in, to the socially accepted realm of appearance in a particular setting. Therefore, whether or not I choose to apply cosmetics for a certain occasion can reflect the position of my self-esteem. Application of the aforementioned grease can also see to my physical comfort. Moisturizing the chapped, dry crevices is as soothing as the nurturing mother that cares for her newborn's fragile skin. The most conscious need I address when buying lipstick is to search for a certain color that will match a new outfit. So you see, this simple cylinder of crude materials can act as therapist, nurse and artist.

The most recent, and favorite, of my coveted collection is called by the regal name of Mauve Cloud. The name itself evokes images of rosy sunsets and courageous Indian princesses. I procured this particular shade to match a new Easter outfit last spring. Its first opening was ceremonious. Silver case sheds its veil to reveal the awaited one as she climbs the spiral staircase and emerges in virgin form, untouched. As a lover awaits his beloved, the lips anticipate the gentle stroke of the soul-sustaining partner.

Over the years I have applied her shimmering balm to my lips in a variety of locations. Of course, the most convenient and time honored spot is the bathroom mirror. In a pinch, I have used looking glasses suspended from various areas of an automobile. What variety! I've glanced in the rearview if driving, visor if riding, and the side mirror if I was in shape for bodily contortions. When none of the above were available, I peered into the door of an autoclave, bowl of a spoon, or the silvery reflection of the case itself. In the most desperate of situations I have clung to blind

instinct and let my lips search out the curve and peak of her glossy finger in the dark.

When applying her fluid frosting you must hold her gently, respecting her frailty. Glide her across parched lips as a mother's fingertips soothe her child's furrowed brow. Gracefully slide her on tightly drawn lips as a skater's blade artistically strokes the smooth surface of the arena. If you are rough or forceful the fragile beauty may bend and crumble, crushed beneath the weight of a heavy hand. Let her only lift her head to meet your needs, for it is never necessary to reveal her waist, laden with drops of perspiration from the elements.

Even when time has passed and she pokes her stubby head from the case, like a turtle from a scarred shell, she will still be the artist who completes the finishing touch to the canvas of your face. Each morning, she will be the sunrise of your smile.

Ruff Dreams

They twitch and twitter, their rolling slumber punctuated by whimpers or purrs, and while it appears that an animal's sleep includes dreams, we humans question those dreams: Are they fantasizing about fish dinners or warm skies for hunting? Are these only random nerve responses or are they dreaming as we do – with our symbols and bright imagery? Jacob Bronowski notes that "to imagine is the characteristic act . . . of the mind of man" (131). And so we wonder, we try to understand and being human, we grasp for the meaning of the things around us. And through this grasping must come recognition and acceptance that while it is animal instinct that allows us to recognize and run from the wolf, it is through our imaginations that we can see the wolf in sheep's clothing.

A startling significance between the consciousness of man and animals is that an animal's memories are incomplete and that "they do not depend, as human memory does, on calling to mind the recollection of absent things" (Bronowski 132). An animal might remember to stay in the yard or which pocket holds the treat, but these are more conditioned responses rather than the use of memory with which people are familiar. And this linear memory in animals can't compare to the dimensional memory capacity of the tiniest human.

In the life of the Pueblo Indians, imagination and instinct were intertwined. Keeping no written records, this ancient people maintained their heritage and passed on thousands of years of knowledge through their tribal story-telling (Silko 330). Observations of their culture as they survived their harsh environment display the importance of pack instinct and imaginative memory as their group rituals made significant people and events in an individual's life important to others, provided continuity of memory from generation to generation, and in cementing a member's interrelationship with the tribe, it enhanced survival. An instinctive drive in both man and other animals is to mark their territory in some way in their mind and in a culture where "everything became a story", no matter how creative or inventive the narration the accounts centered precisely on real landmarks and on places associated with water, resources, or danger (331). But while these people illustrate practical animal instincts, they do so by

recalling and classifying their memories – expressing their experiences through the singularly human symbolism of language and with the inspired images that can only be created by the mortal mind.

Instinctively, we respond. Imaginative, we live. Bronowski points out that what really separates us from the animals is our ability to play with and manipulate symbols – our “gift of imagination” (131). But while it is specifically human, it is not only a gift, but a necessity – symbolism is vital to our existence.

We live in our heads: alone, our humanness is born in the private world that we carry on our shoulders every moment of every day. And while we share the same cerebral streams and gullies that allow our brains to be mapped like the countryside, the passing scenery is different for every person on the ride. Sensory input is seized upon by the mind and differentiated into a million possibilities, a billion tiny judgments: each one personal, each one unique. But the similarity of brain structure among humans still allows us to snatch and grab hold of the common thread of thought. Characteristically, our intellect struggles to recognize the unknown and categorize the unfamiliar. We feed on the symbolism of Coleridge’s river in *Kubla Khan*, our thoughts naturally twisting and turning, “meandering with a mazy motion” as our fancy devours his poem (169). But while its symbolism is similar to all, it is our particular imaginations that mold it to our minds and carry it to our inner world.

Imagination and its imagery – it is the nexus between human creatures, a power so immense and vital that it clings to everything. Acting as the bridge between the tumbling worlds in other’s heads and the world in our own, it permits us to synchronize their spins for tiny moments.

A large part of an animal’s life is instinctive response and the lack of symbolic ideas prevents him from moving mentally through time and “imprisons him in the present” (Bronowski 133). But we are free – our minds leap and dance, forward and backward in time, reliving moments and reaching for the future. We go to places we’ll never be and dream of people we’ll never meet.

We know that we are more than flickers of electricity skipping along neurons. Our imaginations expand on our instincts and through each thought we perpetually create – boundless and beyond measure. So we’ll spend those lifetimes in our heads, our thoughts and perceptions breathing things, alive and aglow. Through our language and fantasy our symbols spark to life as, lightning-quick, they touch off wildfires of thought. It has always been through dreaming that man finds the inspiration for living and so, as Fido sleeps to restore his body, we will sleep to restore our minds.

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Beach Dream

Warm air caresses bare skin, drying the perspiration oozing from naked pores. The wind is not strong enough, though, to push the humidity through the air, so it hangs like a yoke upon the scene, causing one to loathe every movement made necessary by the burning sand under foot.

The water is calm today. The sun hits it evenly. It looks like translucent glass — until an artificial wave moves the water. What had appeared so gentle menacingly crashes to the shore, smashing golden cities and dreams of the children who built them. The boat glides deftly through the cool blueness, like an arrow closing in on its target, only the boat has no target; it carves temporary figure-eights and moves onward.

Two imposing figures perch upon the red lifeguard tower. They peer into black binoculars, wishing for second sight. Their leathery bodies, well-seasoned by the sun, are long and athletic; though folded serenely, they still exude power. They willingly drench themselves in its mightiness, as if it could share its strength. Calm sentries, they guard their shore with protective hearts, ready to save fellow sun-children in distress.

Mothers prod shivering children clad in Crayola colors, grainy sand sticking to wet bodies. Sand pails, shovels, Frisbees, and other toys in tow, they trek back to waiting cars and mini-vans, painfully anticipating the inevitably gritty ride home.

Lapping waves keep time with the rhythmic booming of a nearby stereo. A unifying presence on the beach. Each action answers a phrase of music. It's a lowbrow symphony of sights.

Young people flex and bend tanned skin during an intense game of volleyball. Between matches, they gather at their coolers, guzzling water in long draughts. And they pass around a bottle of suntan lotion, hoping for a good one — a keepsake from a perfect day.

The sweet scent of cocoa butter — so sweet, it wants to be tasted — wafts through the air as sunbathers enjoy their repose, stretching every now and again like well-fed cats, when disturbed by a stray breeze.

The sun children are oblivious to the passage of time this afternoon. The many cares and concerns of real life lie in wait as evening draws near, but these trappings must wait. The sun is high and the tide low; they live for the moment.

Winter scene, mid-1970s.



A Folktale: The Land of Literati

Long ago, in the Land of Literati, a King and Queen lived happily with their three children in a large though not too imposing castle. From each window, for as far as the eye could see, lay their domain. The royals of this dominion felt an unusual duty towards their loyal subjects. All the inhabitants of Literati were to become literate! By proclamation, the ability to read and write was allotted to the loyal citizenry. Slicing through red tape, the King bestowed the first part of this project onto the shoulders of his eldest daughter, the young and beautiful, Princess AlphaBetty, while his two sons continued their studies at a foreign university.

Every newborn was visited by the Princess AlphaBetty. She made up games, told stories and introduced every child to the “letter people.” The alphabet song became a familiar refrain. Everyone hummed it. The mystery of those twenty-six figures was soon unraveled. Vowels and consonants fought it out and though they were far outnumbered, vowels were felt to be the most powerful. Why, by substituting a different vowel in between the same two consonants, a whole new and entirely different word could be created. The princess was extremely good at her job. She allayed fears and heightened enthusiasm. Children were writing everywhere; in the dirt with sticks, on rocks and bricks with soapstone, on slate with chalk, and the luckier ones, on paper with bits of charcoal. It was infectious and soon the entire sovereignty felt they had a firm handle on this reading and writing business. With great pride, AlphaBetty declared her mission accomplished and was thanked by the King and Queen. She retired to the castle library and awaited the arrival of materials to fill the empty stacks.

The years passed. It was slowly becoming evident that the populous of Literati could use some further instructions. Oh, yes, all the young ones sang the alphabet song with gusto. The older children understood the use of vowels and consonants and could spell quite admirably. Spelling bees were annual events eagerly entered by all. Words were wonderful tools. You could speak them, write them down, and read them anytime; aloud or quietly to yourself. Publishing businesses flourished. Markets were awash with magazines, newspapers and books. Alas, it was dry stuff. Mostly factual and kind of boring, like farm reports and schedules for the next forays

into the wilderness. News of the Crusades trickled in so slowly that details were lost from one year to the next. The King and Queen pondered this problem and decided it was time for their second child, Seymour Heare, to go to work.

Seymour was a fine young fellow. Descriptive words poured out of his mouth like water over the falls. This was the very thing needed in Literati. He read everything that was written and livened it up with his red pencil. He interjected adjectives, adverbs and action words where lowly nouns had stood alone. As if painting a picture, Seymour made it all the more colorful with each stroke of his pen. He entered classrooms and lectured to students. "Make this paragraph do more," was his urgent cry and "See more here," was tirelessly penned in endless margins. He roused all students to a level of literary genius. Dictionaries were not adequate tomes for supplanting this new discovery. Seymour wrote the first thesaurus and gave an autographed copy to all children in grade schools. Language took on a whole new flavor upon the people's tongues. Some looked upon it with disdain and called it flowery speech. But Seymour Heare was a champion to his beaming parents and they were forever in his debt. He soon retired and joined his sister.

Once again, time passed and the people grew comfortable with their skills. Subscription rates soared and book clubs sprang up. It seemed almost everyone was reading and writing and talking about what they had read. Words, words, words were everywhere. This fire was fueled by the King and Queen's third child and would soon rage uncontrollably. Now full grown, the talkative and wordy Prince of Prolixity was at the peak of his popularity. He cornered the unsuspecting in cafes, bookstores and on the street. His capacity for conversation was immeasurable and his garrulous nature, though inspiring, often sent some people running in the opposite direction. It was as if a giant, invisible pendulum had swung to its apex. These pursuits of facts and knowledge and the subsequent expressions of such were in danger. The King and Queen feared a backlash. People were grumbling and threatening to burn books. Censorship, heretofore unheard of in Literati, reared its ugly head. The Prince of Prolixity was a clever and devious fellow. He cared not for his parents' earlier desire to educate. He was far more interested in twisting words (no knight in shining armor he). The prince's deceitful mission was more about control. From his tower of office he rewrote, read between the lines and interjected his own opinion. He would only be happy when he knew that everyone felt he alone was right about everything.

This was a desperate effort to reclaim the old silence, which was now

viewed as having been a peaceful time and not the shroud of ignorance it truly had been. Revolution was imminent. Surely, thought the King and Queen of Literati, there had to be a happy medium. The verbose prince was about to undo the years of hard work and accomplishments of his siblings, Princess AlphaBetty and Prince Seymour Heare. Swift action was required, because if nothing was done, the world might plunge back into darkness and nobody really wanted to repeat that age. Options were tossed around. But the Prince of Prolixity had a faithful following and they were opposed to any kind of drastic proceedings, like dethroning the monotonous model of vapidness. For that was what the Prince of Prolixity had become. With his puffed up self importance, he had demeaned the true value of words. He was enamored with the sound of his own voice. Quantity, not quality, was his goal. This was so far removed from the original mission of the King and Queen that they wept with sorrow. It was with equally heavy hearts that they banished their youngest son from the kingdom, forever.

The original proclamation was reviewed and revised. The King and Queen of Literati, now a land of scholarly and learned people, stalwartly faced the fiery debates on freedom of speech and of the press. They realized that controlling what people said, read, and wrote was not their business. Only access to environments providing these skills was their job. The prince and princess cheered their parents' progressive attitudes. From afar, the Prince of Prolixity sneered. He was not invited to return.

Centuries later, his memory was revived and he enjoyed a hero status of his own. His likeness was emblazoned on banners waved by the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Larry King and John McGlaughlin as he served as mentor to all television and radio talk show hosts throughout the land.

I Am Woman?

Little things are often taken for granted. I can remember my first introduction to girlhood one hot, summer day. "Why can't I take off my shirt like Jon and Doug?" I questioned my mother.

Mom simply replied, "Because you're a girl."

"Oh," I thought with my five-year-old brain working overtime, "so that's what it means to be a girl. You've got to wear a shirt even when it would feel better to take it off."

Restrictions aside, I always liked the idea of being a girl who would someday become a woman, although I occasionally tried to see if I had any potential as a tomboy. I didn't. I bravely climbed up on a roof one day, but then I had to cry for help to get down. (The athletic prowess was never there!)

When I was young, girls were easily distinguished from boys by their hair: permanent waves and length belonged exclusively to the female crowns of society. In fourth grade, I was the proud owner of thick, brown hair. Imagine how flattered I felt when my brother, Jon, called me over so his friends could admire my hair.

"You're right, Jon," said Bob, a very attractive sixth grader. "What hair! She wins the contest hands down."

Somehow my pride faded when I discovered they weren't looking at my head. I'd just won the "hairy legs" contest in my neighborhood—and maybe the whole universe. I suppressed the whole event for a while, since knee socks could cover a multitude of sins. But I do remember asking my mother why her legs weren't hairy. I was pleased to learn from her that when a girl gets older, leg hair simply goes away. Ever after that, I eagerly awaited womanhood, the time when everything would be made right.

Still, by the sixth grade, when an occasional event called for young ladies to wear nylon stockings, I had not yet reached the golden age of emancipation from hairiness in the wrong places. Something had to be done. I fastened my garter belt, which always tended to head southward, and carefully pulled the stocking up over my furry calf. Creeping caterpillars! A boy with 20/400 vision could tell I had hairy legs. Suddenly, I focused on a horizontal pick in the nylon that circled my leg. A light bulb

went on. I had a plan!

Into the bathroom I raced to grab a jar of Vaseline Petroleum Jelly. (I always heard people say there were a lot of uses for this product.) With the touch of an artist, I smeared the jelly on my legs, slicking down the hair, training it to go in a circle like that pick in the stocking. I very cautiously lifted the nylon over the leg to preserve my Vaseline-hair- design. "From a distance, I'll look as if I have very picked nylons, but not hairy legs," I thought with satisfaction.

My master plan flopped. The friction of the nylons that never really fit my skinny legs soon reconfigured my leg hair into ringlets, now greasier and uglier than ever. Drastic measures had to be taken. I grabbed my mother's barber scissors. For at least two hours I snipped away, with good and bad results: the ringlets were gone, but my legs were still hairy. It's really hard to cut leg hair close to the skin, even with the best of barber scissors.

I was baffled. Silly as it sounds, I figured my mother had already given me her answer: wait until you're older and the hair will go away. Television didn't help; sponsors in the late 1950s would never discuss such a delicate subject. Most of my friends were lucky blondes with very invisible appendage hair. Finally, the summer before I entered eighth grade, I decided to ask an older, dark-haired girl in my neighborhood about her hairless legs. "Why, I shave them, of course," she said simply.

Shaving was both a solution and a problem. A razor does remove hair. And, let's just say I know where Shylock could get his "pound of flesh." Even today, I bear long shin-scars to remind me that I once won a leg contest of sorts.

Although I abandoned my expectation of magically hair-free legs as a reward for growing up, I still harbored many other dreams for blossoming into womanhood. I blame Jayne Mansfield and Marilyn Monroe paper dolls for most of the disappointment in my young teen years. The dolls gave me visions of curves I'm still waiting to possess. Actually, to be accurate, I think I probably cursed my bust line myself when I was quite young.

The adage, "be careful what you wish for," comes to mind in the case of my chest. When I was in the first grade, I had a Sunday School teacher who wore a v-necked dress one day. As she bent over Tom's paper, I beheld for the first time what I now know is cleavage. (I still don't know cleavage first hand, but I've seen pictures.) I remember distinctly thinking, "Boy, I hope I don't look like that when I grow up!" It looked to me like the crack of a rear-end misplaced, and I wanted no part of it. Some cynical fairy god-

mother took me at my word and vowed never to let me become the least bit top-heavy.

Scarred, curveless, and skinny, I made that chronological passage into womanhood. In the not-so-distant future, another milestone will whisk me into the ranks of the postmenopausal baby-boomers. So what? I've had my trauma and I've survived. Somewhere, maybe everywhere, along the way, I learned to abandon unrealistic dreams of the body beautiful and to try to grow beautiful on the inside. Who knows how ugly and scarred my inner spirit might have been if I had been given a gorgeous outer shell? On the other hand, if my fairy godmother is listening, it might still be an interesting exercise!

My Family's Fugue

One modern prenatal theory claims that a fetus in the womb responds to auditory stimuli from the outside world. If this idea is true, then my involvement in my musical family began before I was born. My mother is a singer, as are my two older brothers, Douglas and Jonathan. I have been told that I sang "Frere Jacques" as a round with my brothers before I could walk. When I was five years old, Mom and I sang our first duet in church on Mother's Day. Douglas, Jonathan, and I were members of Mom's Cherub Choir by that time. As a teenager, I often sang with my mother and brothers in a quartet. Music and church were two main themes of my most influential discourse community, my family.

Taken as a whole, a family can sometimes operate as a microcosm of larger segments of society. Although we united our voices in four-part harmony, each individual part contributed something valuable to the song. Because he had no musical inclination, Dad functioned as our designated driver and devoted audience, one whose support allowed us the freedom to create music together. In our old-fashioned family, Dad's role was definitely head of the household. However, many times he would be left out of some musical merrymaking that began with one of the singing family members humming a tune. The rest of us singers would recognize the song, think about its lyrics, associate it with the event at hand, and put together the puzzle pieces of a spontaneous joke. Within the discourse community of our family, we could all communicate on the common ground of our experience in church; everyone except Dad could converse about matters of musical importance; Mom and Dad could speak to each other about adult topics; and Douglas, Jonathan, and I could discuss things important to us as children.

My brothers and I realized at a young age that certain topics might upset Dad or worry Mom. Therefore, those subjects became the private domain of the sibling subdivision of our family, and we carefully shielded our parents from knowledge of our private talks until we were several decades into adulthood. For example, we often planned excursions on our bicycles to places where, if we had asked, we would have been forbidden to go (because of distance or danger). In later years, we discussed girl friends,

boy friends, and other emotional issues. It is evident that I had early practice in distinguishing among different audiences, a most useful consideration in writing.

In between our singing activities, Mom always spent time reading to us when we were young children. Books such as *Rabbit Hill* and *The Wind in the Willows* were so often requested that my older brothers could correct my mother if she substituted one word for another. Mom read the same way she sang, with great inflection that conveyed the true connotation of the words. She inspired us with the power of language to entertain, to instruct, and to convey emotional feeling.

Later, when we could read and write for ourselves, my brothers and I manipulated and played with language in games of our own creation. Usually, we would select the dullest of our school text books. Then we would target a word and assign it a nonsensical substitute. At once the boring manuscript would come to life as we read it in “corrected” form and rolled around the room in laughter. This seemingly meaningless activity served two purposes for me: it showed me that wordplay is fun and that finding new expressions can transform the entire tone of a piece of writing.

For another afternoon’s entertainment, my brothers and I would play our brass instruments together: Douglas played his trumpet, Jonathan played his trombone, and I played my French horn. Sometimes we would follow all the notes and rules of the music before us; other times we would improvise until we were giggling through our mouthpieces. Music and the music of language could be approached seriously or playfully. At first we had to learn how to play (or read or write) correctly; then, we could have some fun with it.

Regular church choir participation in my growing-up years gave me exposure to the beautifully written, although antiquated, language of the King James’ Bible, while well-executed sermons served to augment my early vocabulary with the language of my faith. Imagine an elementary school girl using words such as “cleave,” “abhor,” “dissimilation,” or “publican.” Most scripture passages that are still in my memory bank remain a part of me because I have sung them as hymns, choir anthems, solos, duets, or quartets. The background I gained for writing, as my family discourse community intersected with the larger church community, is impossible to measure.

In studying literature, I sometimes encountered poems that I first knew as songs. I discovered that, if I can relate a literary subject to music, I can usually write with greater ease and enthusiasm while the orchestra in my head accompanies my composition efforts. My enjoyment of writing about

literature connected with music may be partially explained in terms of vocal theory. In order to sing a song musically, I need to internalize the message of the song to find the appropriate dynamics, tonal quality, and expression to fit words with notes. If I write a composition about the poem, the song's lyrics, I already have contemplated some of its meaning in preparation for singing it. In other words, some prewriting activities have already begun long before I formally start to explicate the poem.

For example, two of the most enjoyable papers I have ever written were analyses of poems familiar to me because portions of each of them were lyrics of songs I had sung. I mentally sang my way through both papers and was edified by the exercise of carefully reconsidering the poets' words. At first, music influenced my decision to choose the poems as paper topics; then, writing about the meaning of the poems' lyrics altered the way I would sing them in the future.

Like most people, I have participated in myriad discourse communities, all of which have helped to shape my individuality. My first discourse community, my family, had the most pervasive and continuously influential effect on my personal development. In addition to a foundation of faith and love, the musical harmony I enjoyed at home became a metaphor for my life. Prolonged dissonance was not tolerated among family members. As each theme in a fugue is an integral part of the whole, each family member's contribution was considered a worthwhile point or counterpoint to a discussion. While participating in my family's fugue, I learned many lessons applicable to writing: to value my expression as well as the ideas of others, to consider my audience, to expand my vocabulary, to know the rules in order to playfully stretch them, and to make musical connections to writing subjects.

Fetching Bums

One of the trickiest things to accomplish for American women of the 1990s is successfully attracting worthy partners for purposes of breeding. While this may not be uppermost in women's minds when they go through their mundane daily tasks of applying makeup or donning their togs, it is a subject always close to the surface. Are they preparing effectively for the task that is set for them by an often capricious mother nature? The physical areas women spend most preparation time with is usually their faces. As the part of the body most often presented to the public, it would make sense that it is an important feature with which to take extra care. But a survey of available research and a look at cultural data may indicate that women should spend more time and take more care with other facets of their physical selves.

An informal poll conducted among thirty-five male steelworkers, concerning what attracts them to women, asked them to rate, in order of importance, the female body parts or areas that most intrigued them. Just over half (eighteen) pronounced themselves to be breast men, and of those, twelve rated buttocks as second on their lists, and four chose legs. Just two opted for the face. Of the remaining seventeen men in the group, nine preferred buttocks, and five embraced the legs, with only one of the total group not having an opinion ("None of your damn business," was the way he phrased it). That left just two who professed a preference for the face. Among the sixteen non-breast men who had an initial opinion, eleven fingered breasts as their second choice, three buttocks, one the face, and one had no other preferences; "The ass is it; that's it," he said. When the question was rephrased to ask what first gets their attention when women are walking toward them and then away from them, the first choice, by a wide margin, was breasts (twenty-five), followed in order by hips (pelvic region) (five), face (three), and legs (one). When walking away, the response was overwhelmingly in favor of buttocks (thirty-two), followed by legs (two) with one subject electing the calves (Alsman). Based on the amount of men who chose breasts and buttocks as their first or second choice, it would seem women are working needlessly long hours on their faces when their efforts might be more productively spent on their breasts and but-

tocks (see Appendix).

It is entirely possible neither sex consciously knows what it is that attracts men to women. In a study conducted by William Griffitt, several males were exposed to photographs of nudes and were asked to rate them by various criteria. The men who were highly sexually aroused and generally positive tended to rate breasts, thighs, and buttocks as “most important in determining their initial sexual attraction to females.” Men who were highly negative toward the models (though equally sexually aroused) rated breasts and the total body unattractive, but found the models’ eyes and buttocks highly attractive (298). (The steelworkers never mentioned eyes as an attractant, but they were not shown any photographs and were commenting extemporaneously). It is interesting that men unattracted to the models would single out those features as appealing rather than breasts. This could possibly be a clue to what is really going on in men’s subliminal minds. An explanation for this phenomenon might be hinted at by the Zoologist, Desmond Morris.

In his book *The Naked Ape*, Morris speculates that, as humans evolved from the other primates and began to walk upright, the human female breasts became fleshy and round. This was not due to a biological need to feed children. Females of other primate species are flat chested and have no problems feeding their offspring or attracting mates. But these other primates, as our ancestors most certainly did, use buttock presentation to indicate when they are ready to breed. Since the human female is almost always in a sexually capable condition, the breasts would seem to have become an ever-present sexual display and a form of “self mimicry” as they are intended to frontally duplicate the female’s own round fleshy buttocks, a trait also not found in other primates and one to which the human male had already become conditioned (74-75).

At least as far back as the Upper Paleolithic period, men honored their women in art. Commonly, these depictions were in the form of what archaeologists refer to as “Venus figures.” These small sculptures were often “representations of corpulent women whose secondary sexual characteristics (their breasts and buttocks) were given special prominence, though their faces, feet, and arms were completely neglected” (“Female”). If Desmond Morris’ theory is accurate it could explain why men who are unattracted to some women would still be aroused by primordial urges when presented with their buttocks, as they were in the Griffitt study. It would further explain the erotic value of the breasts as “buttocks by proxy” and elucidate the results of the steelworker interviews. This could also be an indicator to women as to what they should be concentrating on to at-

tract the best possible variety of males when preparing for breeding opportunities; they should be striving for the ideals represented by the Callipygian Venus.

The Oxford English Dictionary states “callipygian” is a combination of Greek words meaning “stem of beauty” (calli) and buttocks (pyge). It further defines it as “of, pertaining to, or having well shaped or finely developed buttocks.” The Callipygian Venus is a famous statue found in the Museo Nazionale in Naples, Italy (“Callipygian Venus”). *The Encyclopedia of World Art* describes its name as meaning “. . . she who is showing the charms of her uncovered buttocks” (“Sex” 12: 904). And that is exactly what she appears to be doing as she pulls her toga up around her waist to show she isn’t even wearing knickers and looks over her shoulder as if to say “you ever seen a set of buttocks that looks any better than this, my friend?” Her vanity is justified as the exposed anatomy proves to live every bit as enticingly and magnificently firm, smooth, round, fresh, young, and succulent looking as could ever be formed by a mere mortal man in a material so unsuitable as the finest marble on Earth (whew) (“Sex” 12: plate 564). In fact, it is such an attractive posterior that this could explain why “callipygian” has become exclusively attached to the feminine gender. While the definition of the word does not exclude males, it has never come to be used in reference to them. The male buttocks do not seem to have the same breadth of cultural meaning to humans as those of the female’s. The main social importance of male buttocks has been in the area of administered justice.

Someone who lives in Singapore might think of buttocks as a scapegoat. Corporal punishment is the norm in Singapore where martial arts experts administer judicially ordered canings to around one thousand people (two-thousand buttocks) annually (“Bush”). Americans, at least Americans in the 1990s, have mixed feelings about this activity. When an eighteen year old American boy, Michael Fay, was caught vandalizing automobiles in Singapore, he was sentenced to be publicly flogged with six strokes of a cane. Ex-president George Bush described the act as brutal, but thought criticism of Singapore would be counterproductive (“Bush”). President Clinton felt the punishment was extreme, and his intervention got the sentence reduced to four strokes (“Singapore”). That was America’s official position, but the opinions of the literate masses differed. *The Ohio Dayton Daily News* and Mike Royko of the *Chicago Tribune* both reported their mail from readers was overwhelmingly in favor of the canings, and also in favor of bringing this type of punishment into the American system of law (“Nation”). A caning to the buttocks is particularly gruesome. Administration of

the first stroke breaks the skin, and the gluteal area is totally bloody before the second stroke is ever applied ("Nation"). It seems noteworthy that this was happening to a male citizen, and it would be interesting to hear the public's reactions if the offender had been female.

Corporal punishment in various American school systems is still quite controversial, if allowed at all. As someone who spent twelve years in an American public school that allowed paddling for minor offenses, I can say that I remember only two occasions when female students were victims of this justice, and those events caused quite a stir at the following Parent-Teacher Association meetings. The paddling of male students was an event that occurred almost weekly without comment. If Morris is correct in his analysis, then, perhaps the paddling of girls' buttocks is too akin to paddling their breasts for most people's comfort. Psychologically, then, male and female buttocks would be seen as two completely different anatomical structures and explains why "callipygian" could refer to the one and not the other.

Another surprising finding in the Griffitt study, which exemplifies the special difficulty unattractive women may face in snaring suitable sires for their offspring, concerns the different perceptions men have when they are sexually aroused and when they are not. This study found that women seen as unattractive in all their particulars by sexually unaroused males were viewed even more negatively by those who were sexually aroused. They interpret this to mean that " . . . undesirable characteristics are more salient and, thus, more aversive to sexually aroused male subjects" (298). Unlike the situations when men are negative but still find value in otherwise unappealing women's buttocks, physically unattractive women are seen to have no redeeming qualities whatsoever. With the evidence of the importance men place on buttocks directly and by proxy, it is unmistakable that women, especially those who are unsightly, could enhance their reproductive opportunities immensely through renovations of their sterns.

Women's magazines expend a lot of print on techniques for refurbishing and maintaining the buttocks through physical fitness, but they never seem aware of the importance of buttocks to the propagation of the human race. While advocating such medieval sounding tortures as squeezes, power lunges, donkey kicks ("Brand New Butt"), straddle presses, leg presses, side leg-lifts, butt blasters, stationary lunges, alternating lunges, pelvic tilts ("Amazing Butt"), weighted ball routines, static contractions (Cardozo), freehand jump squats, single leg lifts, barbell stiff-legged deadlifts, kneeling back kicks (Zincenko), hip abductions, hip adductions, walking lunges, and sissy squats (Miller) — the only benefits they tout are im-

proved self-esteem and a more stable carriage.

The “quest” for the callipygian ideal, while present in American culture, is usually cloaked under different terms and headings. Rather than refer to the buttocks in a sexual way, it is often done in relation to general physical fitness. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon sense of humor which sees everything relating to the butt as cause for jocularity, keeps women from taking it seriously. However, American women’s concentration on facial beautification may have more to do with commercial causes than misguided instincts. No large or small cosmetics companies have produced posterior cheek blush, age-defying buttock cream, or an overnight gluteal mask and applied the superb marketing skills American industry can bring to bear. This could very well be an excellent niche market for enterprising individuals. It shouldn’t be a difficult sell in this age of commercialized feminine hygiene products. What’s important is to give to those women perceived to be ghastly in appearance the same opportunities to experience the fulfillment and joy of childbearing as afforded to acceptable looking women. It is also vital to subdue the prejudice men have regarding beauty that reverts back to their school days when they learned, and believed, that beauty is only skin deep, but ugliness is to the bone.

Appendix

Notes from the author on The Steel Workers Interviews

The composition of the interviewees cannot be said to be a representative group of men because there was not enough diversity. Of the thirty-five, thirty-one were millwrights (mechanics) and four were welders. They are all employees in the Steelmaking Mechanical Department at Bethlehem Steel’s Burns Harbor Plant in Indiana. The age ranged from thirty-seven to fifty-eight years with one exception; a welder who was seventy-two years old. Twenty-nine of the respondents were White, five were African-American, and one was Hispanic.

The interviews took place in the Steelmaking Mechanical lunch room over the course of one day. The participants were told to imagine a woman dressed in a fairly conservative manner with a mid-plunge-neck sweater and a snug but not tight fitting skirt approximately three inches above her knees and were further told that “vagina” would not be an acceptable answer. The interviews can in no way be said to have been confidential as the lunchroom

is quite public and everyone was taking an interest in the total proceedings. In some ways the findings may be skewed because of undue influence by the bystanders. Surprisingly, over twenty men had been interviewed before anyone suggested that "nipples" would be an appropriate response. Upon this revelation, almost every respondent declared that when nipples could be seen bulging through a garment then that was what totally riveted their attention, and several of them wanted to change their answers. I eventually had to disallow the answer and make them understand that they had to keep in mind a woman with no nipples to be seen. The two men who refused to budge from the response of nipples were assigned to the breast category.

This survey is anything but scientific and I have no way of knowing what degree of accuracy it represents, though I suspect it is not good. However, it dovetailed nicely with my preconceived notions so I have to consider it an excellent source for my purposes.

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First Commencement, June 1969.



From the Shadows to the Record Books — The Contribution of Blacks to Baseball

The crowd stirs with anticipation as the Indianapolis Clowns, . . . take the field for their warm-ups. The second baseman's glove snaps back when he snaps a quick peg from first. He hurls the ball to the third baseman whose diving catch brings the fans to their feet. Then a batter steps to the plate. The pitcher sets, gets his signal, winds up, and throws. The batter swings. He hits it! The shortstop leaps to his right and makes a tremendous backhand stab. He jumps up, whirls, and throws to first just ahead of the sprinting runner. The low throw kicks dirt up by the first baseman's outstretched glove. The runner is out. The crowd roars.

But wait! There's no ball in the first baseman's glove. The batter didn't really hit it. The Clowns were warming up in pantomime — hurling an imaginary ball so fast, making plays so convincingly, that fans could not believe it wasn't real.

They called it shadow ball — and it came to stand not only for the way the black teams warmed up, but the way they were forced to play in the shadows of the all-white majors. Many black ballplayers were as good — if not better — than the big leaguers. All that kept them out was the color of their skin (Ward 4, 6).

The team described above is one of the famous black teams, the Indianapolis Clowns. The Clowns played shadow ball as a part of their total entertainment package. Imagine ten synchronized mimes performing to-

gether, sharing one object. Even more difficult to imagine is the audience acceptance of the “warm-up” as entirely realistic. If it would not have worked, they would not have kept it in the act for countless years.

Entire leagues performed in the shadows for the most part from 1900 until 1947. A few black players performed in the best white leagues before 1900. However, in the establishment of the Major Leagues as we know them today, black faces were not to be seen in uniform on the field until 1947. On occasion when black and white teams of equal levels competed, black teams more than held their own. Unfortunately in the eyes of media, the general fandom, and the lords of baseball, no matter what the skill level, black players were not equal. Only the white players recognized blacks as their athletic, if not social, peers.

There were a handful of black players in the highest white leagues before 1900. However, a so-called “gentlemen’s agreement” led to the restriction of anyone with a dark skin from playing the game (Ward 10). Light-skinned Cubans and Native Americans could play. Dark-skinned Cuban and African Blacks could not. Blacks were forced to play with each other and against each other. Formal scheduling was generally nonexistent. Once again racism raised its ugly head; most booking agents were white and not overly generous.

The premier figure in early black baseball was Andrew “Rube” Foster. He earned that nickname as a pitcher after defeating white superstar Rube Waddell in an exhibition game. He later became an outstanding manager and entrepreneur. Foster even brought a slogan to the charter meeting of the Negro National League in Kansas City in February 1920: “We are the ship, all else the sea” (Rogosin 10). There was only one white owner in this league, J. L. Wilkinson of Kansas City. He had previously owned and promoted a touring team composed of five different ethnic groups and called them the All Nation. Foster initiated a forerunner of the modern draft by authorizing several trades to equalize talent. In 1923 he encouraged the formation of a second league, the Eastern Colored League, to mirror the balance of the white majors. In 1924, a Negro World Series was played between Hilldale of Philadelphia and the Kansas City Monarchs.

The Great Depression of 1929 hurt black baseball tremendously. The game was saved to a large extent by the deep pockets of a criminal. Gus Greenlee was Pittsburgh’s biggest black racketeer. In 1930 Greenlee had begun to sponsor the team that would become the Pittsburgh Crawfords. Greenlee bought two Lincoln seven passenger cars, signed famous pitcher Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson, a slugging catcher who was a Pittsburgh native. He also spent \$100,000.00 to build the first entirely black-owned

stadium. Five of the earliest black inductees into the Cooperstown Hall of Fame played for the Crawfords: Paige, Gibson, slugging outfielder Oscar Charleston, third baseman Julius "Judy" Johnson, and ultra fast outfielder James "Cool Papa" Bell (Rogosin 15-7).

Other black gangsters became involved in the 1930s Six charter members of the second Negro National League were all numbers bankers and friends of Greenlee. The Negro American League was established in 1937 with somewhat more savory leadership. Wilkerson was the leader of this league, and his Kansas City Monarchs were the league's top draw (Rogosin 17).

World War II was the beginning of the best of times. The flood of blacks to Northern industrial cities provided a tremendous fan base. Crowds of 10,000 were common in large northern towns, and special events would often fill major league parks. However, the postwar growth and expansion of most of the economy was not to be shared by the Negro Leagues. The first giant leap for blacks in the "major" league scenario was in reality the death knell for the Negro Leagues.

The signing of Jackie Robinson was the first affiliation of a black player with a "major" league team since before the turn of the century. The premier star of the game in the 1890s, Adrian "Cap" Anson had initiated the drive to exclude black players. His torch was picked up by the man who was generally considered to be the savior of baseball in the 1920s Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis was a federal magistrate chosen to save baseball from the effects of the Black Sox scandal ("Landis" 288). Landis barred eight Chicago White Sox players for throwing the 1919 World Series, and he barred anyone with a dark skin from playing baseball in the "major" leagues. Anson was widely recognized as a racist (Ward 9).

Landis' outlook on the subject was not so widely recognized. Bill Veeck told of his plan to purchase the Philadelphia Phillies in 1944 and stock them with Negro League stars. Veeck mentioned this to Judge Landis out of his respect for the office of commissioner. Landis engineered, Veeck thought, the blockage of his purchase of the Phillies (Veeck 171-2). Shortly after Landis' death in 1944, the Brooklyn Dodgers opened negotiations with Jack Roosevelt Robinson and signed him to a minor league contract. Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. In 1947, Veeck, by then owner of the Cleveland Indians, brought first Newark Eagle, second basemen Larry Doby, and later Satchel Paige to the Indians. Paige, who Veeck maintained was least 48 years old at the time, had a 6-1 record, yet was disregarded for consideration for the Sporting News Rookie of the Year (188-9). If Paige had been white, the News claimed, there would not have been any

notoriety. Veeck replied, "If Paige were white of course, he would have been in the majors 25 years earlier" (185).

Baseball's dictators, Anson and later Landis, reflected a racial feeling that was strong but not unanimous. In the 1900s manager John McGraw of the New York Giants attempted to transform black second baseman Charlie Grant into an Indian "Chief Tokahama" (Ward 16). Opposition was strong, and he was forced to abandon the idea. Problems remained even through the '60s and early '70s. Even as late as 1961 (and perhaps later), black players on the Kansas City Athletics could not always eat with their white teammates, or stay in the same hotels during spring training in Palm Beach, Florida. Occasionally team owner Charles O. Finley would have meals with black players in private homes or segregated facilities. Charles O. Finley grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, watching the Birmingham Black Barons as a youth (Finley). His Athletic teams of 1972, 1973, and 1974 featured black players such as pitchers Vida Blue, John Odom and slugger Reggie Jackson.

Overt racial hatred simmered in 1974 as Henry Aaron approached Babe Ruth's home run record. Aaron's beginnings in the Negro leagues were no preparation for the onslaught of venom that would arrive in his mailbox or at team offices every day. The Ku Klux Klan could not have dictated more brainless bigotry. Babe Ruth grew up in an orphanage. Many of his contemporaries claimed that Babe Ruth's thick lips were a sure sign that he himself had black ancestry (Rogosin 124). This must be the ultimate irony.

Jackie Robinson wore a uniform, a glove, and emotional handcuffs in his early years with the Dodgers. The Biblical phrase "turn the other cheek" had no more brilliant illustration than Robinson's tolerance of abuse. Robinson was neither the youngest nor the best player in the Negro Leagues. But, the Dodgers needed someone who could be both pioneering and patient. He could not fight back with words or obvious emotions; he could only speak through his play on the field. His strength of character was nearly as important as his ability on the field. Previously, scientists and pioneers were derided because of fear and ignorance. Robinson was taunted, scorned, and abused because of his skin color. He had to take the pressure in stride to make it easier for the other blacks who hoped to follow. If he failed to maintain his composure in the face of incredible antagonism, this experience would be labeled a failure. Organized baseball would close the door on blacks again. He succeeded brilliantly, turning cheeks for three years.

Throughout his career, Jackie Robinson always showed everyone his

heels. Robinson brought back into baseball a concept abandoned in 1920. The game was rebuilt around the “lively ball” and Babe Ruth produced excitement through long hitting. Power replaced speed as the method of offense. Ty Cobb’s stolen base records remained unapproached for the most part throughout this era. Robinson and other blacks who followed brought speed back into the game. Speed became both a method of offense and a psychological weapon.

Speed was so much an “un”-factor. Speed was undefendable, uncoachable, and unstoppable. This led to its psychological effect, especially on defenses. Speed doesn’t always show up in the box score — an extra out is not awarded for a great running or leaping catch, and taking extra bases does not show on stat sheets. Speed is something of a terror weapon, to be used in a war. A brilliant passage in Angell’s *Five Seasons* illustrated Cincinnati Reds’ second basemen Joe Morgan’s expectations of his own impact upon Game 5 of the 1975 World Series when he reached base. Morgan drew 16 (yes, sixteen) throws to first by Boston pitcher Reggie Cleveland in a sequence that led to a three-run homer by first basemen Tony Perez. The numbers would have indicated that Perez and good pitching were the keys to a 6-2 game, but Angell summed it up well as he closed “. . . we all knew better. Morgan had been the difference” (302-3).

The idea of scoring a run without a hit was not widely embraced. The introduction of the harder baseball and the slugging of Babe Ruth made the home run the game’s great weapon. Jackie Robinson reintroduced aggressive baserunning as both a psychological and tactical offensive weapon. The first great success of a team depending on a running game came in 1959, when the “Go-Go” Chicago White Sox, a team with little power but great pitching, won 35 games by one run and the American League pennant by a safe margin (Veeck 335). Another of the game’s great ironies was that this team was led by Luis Aparicio, a light-skinned Venezuelan who could have played in any era.

Speed as a weapon reached its zenith in the mid-1980s when Billy Martin’s Oakland Athletics stole more than 300 bases in a single season. They were led by Rickey Henderson, who shattered all records of Detroit’s Ty Cobb and the Cardinals’ Lou Brock. Henderson, as Bobby Bonds did before him, combined power and speed but also added the feature of an excellent batting eye to become the best leadoff man of the modern era. Once again, our sense of irony must point out Mickey Mantle was even faster around the bases than Henderson and hit 500-plus home runs, but the combination of deteriorating knees and conservative Yankee philosophy kept him chained to any base he reached. His contemporary Willie Mays shared some of the

physique and most of the gifts of skill, but used his speed to greater extent on offense.

Mays' career spanned 22 seasons, from the Birmingham Black Barons to the 1973 Mets. Ernie Banks came to the Chicago Cubs from the Kansas City Monarchs in the mid-fifties with enough power to hit more than forty home runs twice while being quick enough to play several years of shortstop. "Minnie" Minoso wants to extend his string of professional appearances to six decades. The tremendous physical skills of these and other players – being able to run fast and forever – separated them from white players of the times. Black players such as Robinson, Mays, Bonds (the elder and younger), Morgan, Henderson, and others combined varying degrees of power with great speed to become a new type of player.

Willie Mays admitted that he realized he was in a form of show business while he was playing for the Birmingham Black Barons at age 17 (Ward 63). A truth held by both black and white teams through all times: gotta put people in the seats. Without television or radio, black teams were entirely dependent on gate receipts. The situation dictated that there must be competition, skill, and entertainment. The first two factors would combine to draw baseball fans, many of whom would come anyhow. The marginal fans who are the key to so many entertainment budgets needed to be attracted.

"Shadow ball" as performed by the Clowns, for the legions of us who never saw the skit, would be comparable to skits of the Harlem Globetrotters. It wasn't really a part of the game, but it was a part of the show. It was similar more to ballet in terms of coordination of movement and teamwork. Most importantly, the skits were based on the game and not disrespectful of it. Upon reaching the "major" leagues, the skits and stunts became something to give up because they weren't needed anymore to draw profitable crowds.

But blacks were for the most part tremendously entertaining to "major league" (white) fans even after the novelty wore off. The lure of speed – check out the crowds at Indianapolis during the next two months – is universal and compelling in entertainment. This is what black players supplied to the game that probably 90% of the white players could not match. This is not to be interpreted as a label of one-dimensionality, however. The greatest gate attraction in all of sports history, arguably, was a pitcher in both leagues, Satchel Paige. Roy Campanella was a roly-poly man, the ultimate picture of a catcher. These two did not list footspeed on their resumes, and they are typical of many black players who were better at pitching or hitting.

The human resource managers of baseball corporations – field managers – were long active in trying to integrate baseball. McGraw was the most active and imaginative. Probably the most influential, however, was Leo Durocher. In 1942, Durocher stated that he could hire colored players if they were not barred by the owners (Rogosin 182). This created a tremendous stir for several reasons. It focused attention on the problem, showed the black players that they had a voice, and alerted the owners, who weren't really the problem in all cases, that they were thought to be the problem. At the time of the integration of armed forces, this was terrible public relations.

Judge Landis' death in 1944 brought a new man to the commissioner's office, Senator A. B. "Happy" Chandler of Kentucky. When questioned about integrating baseball, his famous "Four Freedoms" statement brought hope to those true to the cause. Support was enlisted that ranged from newspaper editors to the Communist Party (Rogosin 185-6). The winds of change had begun to blow. Fresh air was going to energize the game. The only questions to be settled were where, when, and how smoothly.

Those people whose jobs were affected – players – had the most varying responses to Robinson. Player reaction ranged from Anson's threats and the notorious Powell affair in 1938 (in a pregame interview with Bob Elson on the Chicago radio network on July 29, 1938, Powell told Elson that he "worked as a policeman in Dayton, Ohio, where he kept in shape by cracking niggers over the head") to Dodger shortstop Pee Wee Reese's embracing of Robinson on the field in Cincinnati in 1947 (Rogosin 190-93, Ward 54). A sign of the fresh breeze, however, came in the reaction of Jake Powell's employers, the New York Yankees. They suspended Powell for ten days, unsuccessfully tried to trade him after the season, and released him after an injury in 1940. Many white players were from the South and were sometimes openly or covertly hostile to a infusion of black players. Depending on their skill level, the whites were released, retired, or banished to faraway places.

Is the game better now? Of course it is. No game can be better until all the best players are playing in the highest league. Blacks improved American sports. The Europeans and Russians have improved the National Hockey League, and (perhaps) Americans will eventually improve soccer.

Were black players supermen? Great talents, for sure; supernatural, not really. James "Cool Papa" Bell was probably a little faster than Mantle, but Bell certainly was never hit with his own ground ball sliding into second base and certainly could not jump between the sheets before the room got

dark after he turned out the lights (Kram 66). He did steal two bases on the same pitch when the catcher held the ball. Josh Gibson may not have hit a home run in Pittsburgh that was caught the next day in Philadelphia, but he probably hit the two longest home runs in the history of Yankee Stadium (Peterson 158-160). Without a doubt these men could compete on a level field and excel. Negro leaguers played so much in the shadows that I have yet to mention the name of a man who was labeled by a white St. Louis sports writer in 1938 as the best player in baseball history – John Henry Lloyd. Honus Wagner, a great early shortstop, was “. . . honored to have John Henry Lloyd called the Black Wagner. It is a privilege to have been compared with him” (Peterson 79, 74).

It was a shame that African Americans weren't allowed to compete, and probably a crime. It wasn't fair, but life isn't always fair. Most veterans of the league wish they were richer, but they sound like John “Buck” O’Neil a longtime Kansas City Monarch: “Waste no tears for me. I didn't come along too early. I was right on time” (Wulf 150).

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A Round Peg will Not Fit Into a Square Hole: The Loss of Zulu Culture

Ever since I first laid eyes on a statuesque Zulu woman, I have been fascinated by the traditional and sadly changing culture of these tribal people. In 1976 I visited the Natal Province which is located on the eastern coast of the Republic of South Africa. There I encountered a variety of Zulu people, from house-servants and field hands of the English descended South Africans to the wife and son of Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, Prime Minister of Kwa-Zulu. The one part of Zulu culture that stood out to me was the smooth flowing, circular nature of nearly all items of their society and their surroundings. The Zulu people I saw living in the cities were surrounded by lines and angles, and in them I noticed a lack of spirit and contentment. Because the smooth flowing culture of the Zulu people does not fit comfortably into the angular design of White South Africa and because their very being is connected to their culture, the Zulu people are losing their identity as well as their culture.

The Zulu clan was founded in the early 1600s. The father of this people group was born in the region of the Nsuzi River. He gave his name, which means "the People of Heaven," to the Zulu tribe (Judge 1971). Numbering 4,030,000 in 1972 (Berglund 1989), Zulus are one of the ten black ethnic groups that make up 74% of the South African population. They are descendants of the Bantu tribe and are a part of the Nguni peoples (Canesso 1989).

The natural surroundings of the land of the Zulu people gives rise to the circular aspect of their culture. In the Natal province where they dwell lies the Valley of a Thousand Hills. I remember the rolling, gracefully curving swells of land that smoothly slalom into the depth of the valley. The dirt road snakes in and out of the mounds of earth where no sharp peaks, straight lines, angles or zigzags are found.

Evidence of the curved culture is found in many of this society's items. The fighting tools are shields that are oval, not square, covered with the soft hide of a Springbok or cow. The traditional knobkerry, or fighting stick, is a long pole with a rounded knob on the end. These warring items are also incorporated into social events such as courting, dancing, weddings

and socializing. A bride even carries an oval shield and short assegai knife to her wedding ceremony to signify chastity (Judge 1971).

Another item that depicts the rounded culture is the clay food pot which is spherical in shape with a small circular opening at the top. These pots are also used to hold the fermented, homegrown sorghum or maize beer that permeates nearly every aspect of the culture (Judge 1971). The Zulus regard this beer not as an alcohol, but as a food which “warms a man’s stomach with a harmless glow” (Tedder 1968). If the pots are being used for ceremonial purposes such as courting, weddings, or other feasts, they are decorated with colorful beading (Tedder 1968).

The ugubu is a musical instrument that incorporates circular design into the Zulu culture. It is shaped like an archers bow and has a solitary string that is tapped by a reed to produce the melodious tones. A large round gourd is attached to the lower end of the wooden bow to amplify and resonate the sounds (Judge 1971). I recall a young Zulu girl, a kitchen maid of the family I stayed with in the Natal Province, singing delightful traditional ballads while accompanying herself on an ugubu.

Even as the children create games to fill their days, they are naturally drawn to the shape of their surroundings and culture. Tedder (1968) pictures a maze drawn in the sand by Zulu children that closely resembles a thumbprint.

Adornment is another area that reflects this aspect of Zulu culture. To me, the most striking feature of a married Zulu woman is her hair. When I first saw a Zulu lady with this headdress, I marveled at how she could keep such a large, top-heavy hat perched off the back of her head. My hosts had to take some time to convince me that this attire was indeed the lady’s own hair, formed into the shape that signifies a married woman. How proudly and obviously they wore their marriage vows! Tedder (1968) describes how the topknot is formed. “The strands of hair are straightened out by combing, and built up with grease, and possibly some red ochre, into a flattened cone which may eventually reach a length of nine inches or more.” Another female circular fashion is to pierce the earlobe and stretch it with round ear plugs. Eventually, they may accommodate a disc up to several inches in diameter.

Men, women and children drape themselves with ropes of colorfully intricate beadwork which wind or loop around the body and increase in number with the importance of the occasion. As the young unmarried woman in the photograph demonstrates, when on her way to a wedding, important ceremonies require the adornment of band upon band of bracelets and beads.

Elder males of a Zulu clan will proclaim their status by wearing a headring. “This [is] made by sewing a circle of fiber into the hair, covering

it with dark wax, and giving it a good polishing. The surrounding hair [is] shaved away leaving the ring in full view" (Tedder 1968). The resulting headring looks like a shiny leather band perched atop the head and continues the theme of circular ornamentation.

Even a spiritual badge of authority, as noted by Judge (1971), carries through the established pattern. "Gallbladders from cattle crown a sangoma, or diviner who diagnoses illnesses and sniffs out the spirits believed to cause them." This crown of round gallbladders is piled high into a tall heap on the head and is worn like a hat. The sangoma is most often a woman who is a servant to the dead relatives which Zulus call shades. The diviner will interpret the wishes and do the work of the shades though speaking with their spirits (Berglund 1989).

If all the above named cultural items and ornaments, none seem as significant to the heart of the Zulu culture as the family dwelling place. The family kraal (pronounced crawl) is a circle of huts inhabited by the chief, or tribe headman, his wives and his children. In the center of the kraal is an oval pen, or cattle kraal where livestock is kept.

According to Judge (1971), "A traditional Zulu kraal reflects the polygamous society within it. A second wife, known as a Left-Hand Wife, whose children cannot inherit the kraal leadership, lives in a hut to the left of the Great House [where the headman lives with his Great Wife, or first wife]. A Right-Hand Wife is taken on as an understudy for the Great Wife, should she have no sons. A wealthier man may have even more wives." All offspring stay in a hut with their own mother, so the wives each have their own domain. The headman also enjoys an ilawu, a private hut in which he entertains visitors. Cattle occupy the thoughts and cares of the headman over that of the number of people in his family. One such headman could give accurate details and counts of the many cattle he owned, but was not as certain of the fact that his kraal housed 43 family members including his three wives and their children, two wives and the children of his brothers, and two wives and the children of his sons. In the days of King Dingane, circa 1830, his Royal Kraal housed over 20,000 people and was the size of a small city (Judge 1971).

Each hut is beehive-shaped and is made of saplings, curved to form a dome, and covered with a thatched roof (Tedder 1968). The single doorway to the windowless hut is in the form of an arch. It is within the curving lines of the hut and cattle kraal that the spiritual life of the Zulu is symbolized.

Berglund (1989) notes that the doorway to the hut and cattle kraal both represent fertility and prosperity, symbolizing the womb with its sole entrance and exit. The arched doorway is honored because the Khothamo,

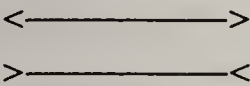
or crown of the arch covered with thatching, is the only place from which shades can speak to a diviner. Also, the thatch of the Khothamo is buried with the corpse at the funeral of an inhabitant of that hut. This is because items of sentimental value, medicine and tools are placed into the thatch of the archway. The spiritual rules of the doorway pertain to the shades. Passing through the arch without hesitation shows respect, unless one is ill, then healing from the shades takes place in the doorway. Also, beer brewed for the purpose of communion with the shades takes place near the arch.

The hearth within the hut is composed of three flat stones set in a circle. One of these stones is for the shade to rest on and find warmth. It must never be moved. Unclean pots left close to the hearth provide food for the shade and promote a good harvest for the next crop. Stepping over the hearth is an irreverent act, similar to walking on graves in our culture (Berglund 1989).

The umsamo is an elongated oval space located at the for back of the hut and is a sacred place, especially in the indlukulu or Great House. This is where the guardian spirits of the kraal dwell. It is a cool dark place that honors the shades and provides a place to leave them food, beer, and snuff (Berglund 1989).

According to Berglund (1989), the shades inhabit the isibaya, or cattle pen enclosure also. The opposite end of the entrance is a sacred place like the umsamo of the hut, but has no name in the Zulu language because there is so common an understanding of this place in their culture that it is not necessary to give it a name. “The cattle kraal is the Zulu temple where the spirits of the ancestors are thought to linger (p.112).” The center of the cattle pen which house the grain pits carries the same significance of the hearth.

These examples of round, smooth or oval lines in the Zulu culture may not seem truly significant to some observers, but the absence of linearity in the Zulu culture is so absolute that when psychologists Muller and Lyer tested their line perception illusion they used Zulu subjects. There smooth flowing culture was not fooled by the illusion. Is our culture? Which line is longer?



The Zulus readily knew the lines were equal distances because angles were so totally foreign to their senses (Roediger, et al 1991).

In order to relate the circular culture with the spiritual culture of the Zulu, it must be realized that the smooth-flowing construction of the Zulu dwelling has significant symbolic meaning especially connected to the fam-

ily, honor, and spiritual aspects of Zulu life and is a central part of that culture. It is also pertinent to understand the Zulu concept of self. Berglund (1989, p.82) quotes a Zulu medical practitioner as saying "Whites have failed to see that in Africa a human being is an entity, not in the first instance divided up into various sections such as the physical body, the soul and the spirit. When a Zulu is sick, his physical as well as his spiritual being that which is affected." So then, if part of a Zulu's world is not at peace with his existence, then his whole being; body, soul and spirit is impaired.

The difficulty the Zulu people presently face is as Judge (1971, p.739) states " . . . the Zulu of today, [is] a man living in two worlds, one of his making and one not." Most male Zulus of working age are driven to leave their families and work away in the cities. There are no jobs in the rural areas for them to earn money with which to purchase status producing livestock. Cattle, as their main commodity, is of utmost importance to a Zulu family. It is used to pay bride price, provides restitution for trespasses (Tedder 1968) and is the measure of a man's wealth. Ellis (1977, p.789) writes of a rural Zulu village in Northern Natal called Ngutu. "Of fifteen families members present, not one was an adult male. The husbands and brothers of the daughters were away in the cities, working. They wouldn't be home until Christmas [usually a year's absence], if then. Meanwhile, money was being sent back, but, most likely, the letters would become infrequent with the passage of time. And also with the passage of time, the seductiveness of the city would spread like lichen, choking off loneliness and the longing for home."

In my own experience of observing the Zulu, the apparent contentment of the individual seemed to wane the further he/she was from the traditional culture. The people who enjoyed their traditionally cyclical culture that I met on the country roadsides and farms were proud and happy as my photographs reflect. Those who worked in the angular city seemed to have lost the soul of their culture. Their loss was evidenced by the drab manner in which they dressed and the mournful appearance of their fallen countenance as they idly gathered on dreary street corners. In the darkness of night they would huddle around fires contained in 50 gallon drums. The flame may have warmed their flesh but it did not seem to ignite their spirits. I wholly agree with Judge (1971) who says "It struck me that a Zulu in his traditional dress always looks dignified. In Western clothes, he often manages only to look poor."

As for the dangers of the city to the traditional culture of these people, Judge (1971) notes that "Rural Zulus care little about skin color as a measure of feminine beauty – preferring such attributes as robustness, diligence and respect – but the standards of city dwellers are changing through exposure to white-oriented movies and advertising." In an effort to promote retaining tradi-

tional values, producers Billy Forrest and Lofty Shultz (1973) made the record *The Warrior*. African singer and musician Margaret Singana teamed with the group Ipi’N Tombia to create an album of ten African songs that ranged from traditional tribal to contemporary township music. I purchased the recording while in South Africa and was impressed by the song “They Took Her Away From the Land”: “This is the story of a young girl who is lured by the fast life of the big City. She leaves her Mother and Father, the solitude and serenity of Tribal life – only to find that the city is corrupt.” The Zulu people I met were saddened by their loss of tradition. I had the pleasure of speaking to the wife of Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. She and her family had just been moved by the South African government into a new, spacious, well-equipped and angularly shaped home. The thoughts she shared about this change were the ones I took note of and recorded in my journal. She preferred the small modest home they had shared for 23 years over this new luxury. It was not of her choosing, the reason for many of the government failures at providing change for the Zulu people. Here was the wife of one of the wealthiest, most honored Zulu men of that time, and she did not appear as content or full of pride as her traditional counterparts I had met in the hills. A part of her was absent; she was not whole.

Whether the smoky, dirt-floored hut is lacking male occupancy, or it has become a cement-block cube with a hard iron roof and a lifeless linoleum floor, the spirit of the Zulu culture is lost in the city and searching for its home. I believe the male flight to the city with its white South

African influence, and the subsequent loss of familiar circular culture has created a loss of Zulu spirit which, to them, is loss of their very being. The economic and political strife of today’s Zulu is going to rob this world of a unique people group. I fear, in time, the People of Heaven will be no more.

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View south from Education Building (Schwarz Hall), early 1970s.



Retrospective

Steven Miller
Jack Moon
Bonnie Sullivan
Ted Hartzell
Linda Zahrn
Hollye Sheaks
Kevin Kissenger
Susan E. Howard
Daniel J. Bazin. Jr.
Barbara Transki
Susan Lichtman
Judith Ann Miller
Bill McCullough
Susan Bortell
E. Thomas Sherry
Mai Nguyen
Cheryl Marks
Claire Blackburn
Brian Mulligan
Tom Teets
Sharon White
James Norris
Denise Underwood-Martine
Jonas Thor
Michael Szymanski

1972
Bus Depot

He stood in the doorway of the waiting room; his shabby brown suitcase was on the floor to the right and slightly behind him. Both glistened as though just freshly painted, yet puddles of water formed around each. On the decades-scared red floor the shimmering rings of water had the appearance of blood. As the door closed, a flash of lightning and peal of thunder accentuated its final movement.

Those who were waiting looked up to see why the storm's sounds had grown louder. What they saw was an elderly man, with gray hair showing beneath a drenched fedora; an ancient with parchment-like skin and eyes that burned brightly in sunken sockets. His coat, though threadbare and patched, had all of the buttons, which were varied in size and color, but still kept the driving rain from soaking through to his other clothes. His shoes at one time could have been expensive, but now had several tears across the uppers, and one toe was wrapped around with friction tape to keep a loose sole from flapping.

Looking around, the man saw that the room was small, and could smell a sweet-sour odor not helped by the rain's dampness. A few of the smells were unidentifiable, but the others definitely had a name: sweat, liquor, vomit, and age.

There were two rows of pew-styled benches, with four to each row. Only two were occupied. One was being used by a family of three, the adults talking quietly, while a baby slept snuggled in its mother's arms. The other was being used by only one man, who was also sleeping. Protruding from his coat pocket was a brown paper bag, with the neck of a pint-sized bottle showing.

In front of the benches, taking up the whole wall, was a ticket desk and baggage counter. Behind this was a rack containing rows of tickets, red and green one, yellow and blue one, all ready to take someone away to other places. On the wall above this was a clock, with a red and white disc spinning in the lower half (this in the place of the second hand) slowly

moving the minutes out of existence. Between the two was a Confederate flag flanked by photographs of Jefferson and Wallace.

Finishing his look around, the old man took his hat off and slapped it against his leg to rid it of excess water and caused little spots of blood to appear on the red tile where the droplets fell. He leaned over to pick up his suitcase and moved slowly towards the ticket window. At first glance he thought that perhaps no one was working, but as he drew nearer he saw tendrils of smoke wafting up to the flyspecked ceiling.

Placing his hat on the ink and age-stained counter, he looked down to where a fat, sodden man sat reading at a paper-cluttered desk, while a radio played country and western music. The old man cleared his throat once, but the stodgy-looking man did not respond. Looking just beyond his hat, the man saw that there was a small service bell on the counter slightly behind the wicket, which he rang.

Looking up from his girlie book, the ticket agent saw he had a customer, rose to his feet, and approached his station with all the speed of a slug, his cigar leaving a trail of slime behind.

The hopeful passenger told the agent where he wanted to go, placed a small amount of money on the counter, and waited while his ticket was removed from the rack.

When his ticket had been given to him, along with his change, the elderly man smiled, picked up his belongings, and started towards one of the empty benches.

Now, the ticket vendor spoke. "Old man, he said, "you coloreds are supposed to wait in the other room."

Stopping for a moment, the old man nodded his head, and then started to shuffle to the door he had first come through. Reaching the door, he put his hat on, and looked through the grimy window at a billboard across the street. Its faded message, blocked out in the color of the oldster's skin, read: "Love thy Brother."

1973
Jack B. Moon

I am awake but something is different; I know not what. The alarm is ringing; I can hear the alarm ringing but there is no sound. It is not daylight but there is no darkness.

This morning is like all other mornings but something is different! I can hear my beloved wife preparing bacon; I can even see her from where I am. I can smell the bacon, but will I taste it?

This is quite some time! I believe I am now where I used to be but closer to where I am going.

To think that I am 82 and just three weeks ago we celebrated my Becky's 80th birthday. For a woman of 80 she is beautiful, remarkably strong and wise. But what will she do when she realizes that she may not be able to wake me and that I may not be having breakfast with her this morning?

I can hardly wait to find what is so different about today.

My Beck is brave and strong but this period of time which she calibrates as days will be difficult for her. I will spend much of my energies supporting her in her future days until she adjusts to my absence.

Now she is entering our bedroom to tell me my breakfast is ready. She is smiling as always. Now she is trying to wake me. Today something is different; I died last night.

Yes, I now am on my road home and only in the future will I learn how close I am. I stop and think of all the happy and wonderful things that happened in my old world. Becky, it was here that I realized the need for a better understanding of people, the need for patience and tolerance - things which I could only learn in your world. My world before your world! I felt a stirring, an ache, to be conceived; suddenly I was a thought, then someone else's thought. Then I was being propelled to a new destiny. I had to keep going, for I was one feverishly traveling to where? To your world and to you, Becky.

I can feel it again; I am a thought and then someone else's thought

and now I am one of two. Now we are one, we are four, and more and more and more. Where I am resting, it is warm and dark. I am small and it is as if I am floating in an ocean of love. Once in a while I stretch and kick, but most of the time I rest. I rest because I am getting bigger and stronger; yet I cannot think as you think. I am developing a heart to beat, lungs to breathe, a brain to think.

All is happening so fast. Sometimes I can lie still and then again I am being bounced around.

I am moving; I am changing position; I am traveling. There is a pressure; there is something squeezing against me. It is cold where I am going . . . cold. Things are not as they have been before. Things are not -Aaahh.. . .I am breathing, breathing. I hear noise; I see light. . . . I have been born. It is September 4, 1944.

My parents call me Jack. They are proud I am their new son. I am named after my mother's brother who was killed in a war. Perhaps I am he? The papers they have prepared say I will be called Jack Bernard Moon. How excited I am they live on a farm. Can you imagine seeing a cow? A cow that you can touch and feel and milk. And now your paper reads: FUNERAL SERVICES for Jack B. Moon, born September 4, 1944; deceased this date, October, 2026.

Bonnie Sullivan

1974

A Carnivorous Creature

When she returned from the beauty parlor, she went straight to her bedroom. One entire wall was mirrored. She looked at herself and smiled. She always smiled when she saw her reflection. She thought how nice it was to have the room all to herself. When she and Hank moved into the new apartment, she had convinced him that separate bedrooms was a sensible idea. He was up late so many nights working. He usually woke her up getting into bed, and then he tossed and turned the rest of the night. He finally agreed that he was being selfish and allowed her to have her own room. He visited her, of course, about once a week, which she found very annoying. She liked sleeping alone, and sleeping with Hank was so uncomfortable.

Her room was like a sacred oasis dedicated to her beauty. On her dressing table were bottles and jars of all shapes and sizes. Short, squat bottles that promised the ageless beauty of Cleopatra, tall, thin bottles for the allure of Raquel Welsh, square, round and octagonal jars guaranteed to produce the skin of a baby - all awaited her command. Like sentries, the closet was filled with all the latest fashions. Each was carefully selected to enhance the color of her eyes, to capture the lustre of her hair, to compliment the curves of her body.

She changed into a gold lamé evening dress for the dinner party at the country club. She admired the final results in the mirror. "Yes," she thought, "I do look good, but why shouldn't I? I'm always careful. I never eat or drink too much. I hate to think what I'd look like now, if I had given into those foolish ideas of Hank's. Thank God, he doesn't bother me about them any more."

Hank and Marsha had been married for six years. For the first two years he had wanted to move to the country and raise a family. She always found reasons that made it impossible. Now he didn't mention it any more.

She went into the living room to await Hank's arrival. She curled up in a big, soft, over-stuffed chair and listened to the crackling hiss of the fire-

place. As she watched the flames do their pagan dance on the log, her mind returned to the past and her first husband. She still couldn't understand why he had left. He was only a bank teller when they were first married. She had made the right friends and entertained the right people. She had shown him how to dress and helped him to improve his personality. Through her help and guidance, he was on his way up. The next stop was the vice-presidency of the bank. One night, he just walked out on her. She never saw him again.

The click of the key in the lock brought her back to the present. Hank was home.

"Good evening, darling," she greeted him. "You have about an hour to get ready for the party."

Damn it, Marsha, I'm too tired. I've been feeling lousy all day, and I just want to relax."

"Now, Hank, you know we have to go. It's very important. Your boss will be there, and you do want that promotion, don't you? I'll fix you a drink." His hand trembled as he raised the glass to his lips. She picked out his suit, shirt and tie and laid them on his bed. When he had finished dressing, they left the apartment.

As they reached the lobby of the building, she remembered the gold earrings she had wanted to wear. She asked Hank if he would run back upstairs and get them for her.

"Marsha, you look beautiful without them. . . . Are they really necessary?"

"Please, darling. They go so well with this dress, and I did want to wear them."

She waited for him in the lobby.

As he was returning, she spotted him at the top of the stairs. His face was red, and he was gasping for air. When he reached the bottom stair he clutched at his chest and fell to the floor. Marsha rushed to him. The mask of death covered his face. A tear escaped from each of Marsha's eyes and cautiously made their way down her cheeks like weary travelers in a strange land. She looked so frightfully drab in black.

1975
A Mind of One's Own

Where was Isabel Archer when Virginia Woolf sat down to write *A Room of One's Own*? By that time Isabel had mellowed for 49 years on the bookshelf; she should have made a deep impression on the astute Woolf. Why didn't she?

Where was she?

Absent. As Woolf peeled away layer after layer of superstition, male arrogance and female submissiveness, as he laid bare just what it would take for women to stand on the same literary level with men, she somehow neglected Isabel, who in so many ways prefigured the kind of woman Woolf sought. Given that Woolf was concerned in the book, first, with securing the right conditions for the woman of letters and then, secondly, seeing that these women created characters, who themselves were liberated, nevertheless in bypassing Isabel Archer, she bypassed one of the best illustrations of her very solid theories.

Look at Isabel. She strikes a hard, clear outline; she is resolute, she has intelligence and imagination, and at an early age falls into money which will give wing to her imagination. Her uncle's legacy parallels the guaranteed income Woolf wrote about. Isabel Archer is a thankful fugitive from the stifling sitting-room inanity of the Little Women mold – ironically, even Isabel had to be plucked from a sitting room of her own, the dark enclosed Albany chamber. Once away, she tastes, she travels – her incessant flitting about Europe, is a symbol of freedom, both physically and mentally – she feels, she touches, she learns. Isabel's longing for experience explains why Madame Merle is so magnetic, a woman who “appeared to have in her experience a touchstone for everything” Impressionable, malleable Isabel can be likened to the green seedling and Merle to the tall branching tree Isabel wants to become, when they first meet.

Through her long season of ripening, Isabel shuns any opportunity for conventional inner security, though she bows to a demand of outer security in her marriage to Osmond. Even this glacial union, calm and regulated as

it appears to some in the naive social circle, with its Thursday night receptions and unruffled, leisurely pace of the rich, even this is taken on by Isabel – with great illusions, yes – as an adventure, a way to discover.

Virginia Woolf, speaking of women not as adventurous as the heroine of *Portrait of a Lady*, deplored that a writer, a good writer like Charlotte Bronte, should apologize for herself through her heroine Jane Eyre for wanting to see more of the world than women were permitted. Both writer and character evinced remorse at wanting more out of life than their allotted due, at wanting to “reach the busy world,” to have “intercourse with my kind” and more “acquaintance with variety of character than was within my reach.”

Reaching the busy world is exactly what Isabel sets out to do. Unlike Bronte, neither Woolf nor James practiced the art of apologia when it came to women, and James will not let his creature, Isabel, truckle to men. Like Woolf, she abhors feminine passivity, the image of woman as an empty vessel. That James created a woman from the rib of Woolf even before Woolf was born, and that he disliked the thing that Woolf disliked, in attitudes more or less gracefully passive, for a man to come and furnish them with a destiny. Isabel’s originality was that she gave one the impression of having intentions of her own.” The passage is the sentiment of Bronte and Jane Eyre at the window, and the sentiment of Woolf, rephrased. One knows that Woolf and James love to see that originality.

If Isabel is not a writer and as such cannot be directly equated with the female writer whom Woolf addressed, at least Isabel does practice her own art: to Isabel life is art. Nothing is to come between the fullest relish of life – even with its attendant pains, which are part of the game – and the full, unrestricted and unabashed expression of it.

This draws Ralph to her. The clean, forward style of Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* is found embodied in life in the personal style of Isabel Archer. Woolf depicts women writers as if a veil interposed between what they feel and thin, and what they write, making stultified works only imitative of men, not original. Isabel tries desperately to lift any veil which might inhibit expression and largely succeeds in making her life her art.

It is the strength of Isabel that she, at least, had the illusion of freedom and that she aspired. Her life, unknown to her, may have been sustained by other, but the essential thing – take note, Virginia – is that for a long while she had the integrity of acting out her own drama, calling her own shots, and if this later turned out to be a bitter chimera, she does not lose one ounce of integrity for being made to run a fixed race. That she did not wait for others to breathe before she breathed is enough for me; the

Merle-Osmond conspiracy seems in many ways to wash out as a useful melodramatic ploy for James. After marrying Osmond, of course, she relinquishes some of that expressive freedom and shackles herself with a wifely duty-boundedness, but this is not Isabel, and she knows it.

James further strengthens Isabel by consenting to listen to the musings of his heroine, musings that are not just plot embellishments, but are actual halts, where we can hear idea strike idea in her mind. Women have ideas! Thoughts! Yes, James grants this; he even glorifies it.

Endowed with a mind of her own, Isabel is the antithesis of Alcott's four little women who must penitently genuflect every time a desire, that would be so natural to Isabel, crosses their minds. Isabel is the extension of the Virginia Woolf who defied the glare of the Oxbridge Beadle as she dared tread the sidewalk of that hoary, encrusted men's college. Isabel, that bold American, would walk on the sidewalk too.

As Woolf sifts through the library at the British Museum and chances upon a novel of an obscure contemporary female author, she is astounded that the writer ties her heroine's life with the lives of other women, that the heroine is not vacantly characterized only in relation to the world of men. Had she forgotten how James made Isabel? Isabel is no adjunct, no attenuated man or docile half-person shuffling around as Man's helpmate. She romps boldly through the novel with both men and women as instructors and never wants for examples on how to live. *Portrait* is rich with fast-moving people, sure of themselves often to the point of arrogance, profusely articulate even to the point of talking too much, too damned introspective much of the time, but people who are not afraid to look you in the eye and unload their minds. The strongest people are the women, with the too-perfect Madame Merle twinkling as the cynosure in a whole galaxy of aggressive, assertive females. Madame Merle and the inimitable Henrietta Stackpole, who is as extraordinary as her name: they want something; they go get it. Except for Caspar Goodwood, the men are dilettantes, vapid and superfluous in an industrial age; they have lost their utility. The women wear the pants. The women have an incandescent directness, a taunting boldness of the eye.

With such a supporting cast and with the right material advantages, Isabel need not suffer from the plight of Shakespeare's Sister, Woolf's instructive tale of an imaginary sister to the great poet, a girl as talented as her brother, but driven to despair because she is not allowed to express herself like her brother. For women of the late 19th century when *Portrait* was written, Isabel's position must have seemed dreamily unattainable; even to women today it must not appear to invite scratch test of the sur-

face. But no matter, Isabel happens to be blessed with the purely basic material conditions necessary for the free and creative life. She is the rare woman who in this regard fills Woolf's prescriptions. Just as rare is the sating of her appetite for experience. Day by day Isabel aspires— she may not succeed — to put forth an original mind, to live out her imagination. Relinquishing this is the greatest pain of all for her. One feels that his loss was taken harder than Ralph's death or the loss of control of her money to Osmond.

Rarest of all is the sexlessness of her mind, in the positive sense. Though by her actions she vanquishes one suitor after another, by her intentions it is clear she does not deliberately set out to hurt for sport. By putting off protestations of love she is not trying to raise the stakes to snare eventually the juiciest fish in the sea. She neither will today to men nor keep them hungry at the door; she tries to dispel their illusions of romance with merciful speed. Woolf spoke of the "small spot at the back of the head," symbol of the machismo syndrome in men, which makes them treat women disparagingly in an effort to bolster their own egos. Isabel seems not to harbor such rancor toward men. In *Portrait* imagination is large and motivating. It is seldom borrowed convention. It is to allow Isabel the ultimate: to define herself and live through that definition. Woolf wished to see just such female writers, women not eclectic but fresh in their approach. Fortunately for them, women at least have their won peculiar fore to work with, the novel, Woolf said.

Isabel tries to work with life as a good female novelist, by Woolf's standards, works with the novel, by infusing it with imagination unencumbered by bitterness toward men, or by apologies.

1976 The Unexpected

Another light. Shit! What do they want now? The ward clerk hollers out without even looking up from her desk, "Miss Smith, the patient in 313 needs your assistance." Sometimes, I swear she has eyes in the back of her head.

"All right, I'm on my way." Honestly! Doesn't she realize I was already in the process of answering it? As I go down the dimly lit hallway, I take a quick glance at the time clock as it changes. Ten forty-five, decent, only thirty minutes left on this shift, thank God! 310-311-312-313! I slowly open the door just enough to poke my head through and politely ask the oft-repeated phrase, "May I help you?"

A sound of someone straining to speak issues out of the darkness. I push the door open further, causing a beam of light from the hallway to rush past my shoulder and strike upon the midsection of the bed. I enter the room and repeat, "I'm sorry. I didn't hear you. What do you need?" The voice continues the forced whispers in a pleading tone. The light reveals a familiar but out-of-place object lying on the bed. As my eyes grow accustomed to the dark room, I realize what the object is. A cold chill runs through my body as I absorb the initial shock. It is a nose, artificial, I hope! For a second or two it gives me quite a start. More frightening is the thought of who or what possesses or lacks it. The persistent voice keeps on with the harsh forced whispers pleading for something. I wonder if I dare turn on the lights. Are the nurses and doctors aware of what's in this room. Why not me? A little forewarning would have been appreciated to the "max" right now. I want to leave but am compelled to stay. Why? Duty?!? Me, thinking of career and responsibility now. At a time like this I should be considering my sanity, not to mention my heart which at the moment has arrested!

Slowly, I reach for the light switch. Now! The light reveals the condemned creature. I feel sickened and freeze at the mere sight of it. The hideous image is an elderly woman with cancer of the face. Her face is

unrecognizable due to the absence of a nose. A large gaping hole starts just below the right eye and continues down the face. It steadily increases in depth and width, revealing the thrashing tongue as she persists in trying to speak. She continues the forced, snakelike hisses in a nasal twang. I think she's trying to ask for a drink of water. While her body remains motionless, her eyes dart quick glances from me to the water glass on the night stand. I reach for the glass and start to bring it closer to her. Suddenly I'm aware that the fright and horror I felt are replaced with compassion and pity. She takes a couple of small swallows and motions with her eyes that she is through.

1977

The Queen of the Alley

The alley was our community. It consisted of a dirt road, wide enough for one and one-half cars to travel on, two parallel rows of ramshackle houses, and some twenty overactive kids. The first row of houses, or First Avenue, had the banks of the Guyandotte River for its back yard. The other row, Second Avenue, faced the “main road” which eventually led to the town of Logan, West Virginia. The alley ran between the two lines of homes. When you raised your head you looked up, way up, to rolling green mountains, stripped in places by the arduous labor of the coal miners, but majestic in their beauty nonetheless. At each end of the alley was a hill. The hill at the east entrance was steep and rocky. The hill at the west entrance was known as the “cement hill.” The summer of my sixth year, the State Road Commission had started paving the dirt alley. Their efforts ended at the bottom of the west hill. The smell of pinto beans, fried potatoes, cornbread and green onions permeated the air. An underlying stench of the coal-polluted Guyandotte invaded your nostrils upon entry to the neighborhood. In the summer of 1958, this was my world.

We lived in the bottom half of a two-story house. My family was my mother and her mother. I called my grandmother “Mommy,” and my mother was “Mother Pat.” We were a closely knit trio of females. Mother supported us by teaching school. Mommy was bedridden by cancer. She had once been a vital woman. She’d raised six children, only two of whom were hers. In her youth, she’s married a widower, then became widowed herself. She’d completed her high school and college education while her children were still young. She had been an elementary school teacher and principal. She was a survivor. It cramped her style to be bedridden, but she accepted her fate with a grace a lesser woman couldn’t have managed.

During that summer, all the kids played in the alley. We raced our bicycles down the cement hill, hoping to get up enough speed to climb the steeper dirt hill at the other end of the alley. Sometimes, we’d get daring and ride with no hands. I was particularly fond of this. When we tired of riding bikes, we’d play the normal childhood games of “Hide-and-Go-Seek,”

“Red Light, Green Light,” “Freeze Tag,” and of course, “Doctors.” Sometimes we’d swing on the vines of the trees that lined the river bank. I was “Jane,” Keith Medley was “Tarzan,” and little Susan was always either “Cheetah” or “Boy.” When we were finished with these games, we’d gather on my back porch for some ghost stories.

At the end of the day, I’d ramble home exhausted and tell Mommy of the day’s play.

One day, my routine was interrupted. Strange men were at my house, pounding and scraping on the wall against which my grandmother’s bed been.

“What’re they doing?” I asked Mother.

“Putting in a window for your grandmother,” she explained.

“Why?”

“So she can watch you play,” she answered.

I was so excited! In a couple of days the work was completed. Mother hung curtains, which were immediately opened. Now Mommy could view the alley!

It soon became a ritual for her to call out “Red light, green light” for us kids. She told us which steps to take (giant or baby) in the game “Mother, May I?” When she tired, we’d run off to pursue more active games. At dusk, we’d stumble home to my back porch for the nightly ghost stories; only now we had a new storyteller. Mommy opened up a new world for us through her stories. What a fine assortment she knew! She solved childish arguments from her window and managed to remain everyone’s friend at the same time. She was the undisputed queen of the alley.

The window answered a need for all of us. Mommy became a participant in my childhood. She could view the outside world now, gazing upon children playing instead of looking up at the ceiling; she could see the majestic mountains, especially beautiful that year, it seemed, instead of looking at four walls. The window was her doorway to life. For me, it was a priceless gift. I was sensitive to her needs, and we grew even closer after our link together was further bonded.

Mommy died a few months later in a cold hospital bed sixty miles from our alley. When she was admitted to the hospital, she requested a room with a window. The nurses, knowing death to be soon at hand, sneaked me in to see her. (I always had to stay in the lobby while Mother visited because I was underage.) When they opened the door to Mommy’s room, she was lying in bed, gazing out the window. I called her name and waved from the doorway. As she turned and returned my wave, the nurses bundled me off in a flurry of white before our escapade became known. That was my last glimpse of Mommy. Somehow, it seemed a fitting one.

1978
Streamside Equality

There's something strangely seductive about sitting on a stream bank on a crisp fall night fishing for salmon in the dim glow of a lantern. As the stream lazily rolls by, it is interrupted periodically by a splash in the shadows as a king salmon attempts to jump over a log. A yell of "Fish on!" breaks the silence sporadically as a comrade somewhere in the darkness fights a fish. Men and boys exchange idle chatter as equals. A boy feels important as he tells the story of a conquered fish to an older man who listens intently instead of dismissing it as the nonsensical ramblings of a child. It makes a boy feel good when adults listen to him as an equal, makes him feel like he fits into the adult world.

I remember sitting on a stream bank one night, daydreaming about the events of the day. Suddenly my pole jerked, then bent over in a tight arc under the strain of a heavy fish. I hollered, "Fish on!" as I struggled to keep the fish from getting wrapped around a submerged log. Some men that were fishing a few yards down the stream came running to my assistance. They shouted advice while one of them wielded a net and prepared to scoop up my prize as it drew closer to shore. When it was within reach, he skillfully netted it. As it lay at my feet, sparkling and jaw agape, we made estimates of its weight. One of the men shook my hand and congratulated me. At that moment I felt like a man. I had done what they were trying to do.

It's times like that which make one feel important. On a stream bank, stereotypes of men and boys, blacks and whites, are forgotten. Everyone is suddenly equal when the pressure is on.

1979

The Underrated Value of the Comic Strip

One of our most common sources of humor is the newspaper comic pages. We laugh, chuckle, and ruefully shake our heads over the latest escapades of Dennis the Menace, Archie and His Gang, and Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Snoopy. Of course, the obvious intent of the comic strip is to provoke laughter, but we often come away provoked, too, with a new insight into human nature.

The comic strip, "Peanuts," is a fine example of tempering subtle humor with a deeper awareness of ourselves and the people around us. Charles Schulz, the creator of the comic strip, has effectively peopled an imaginary world with appealing, amusing, and lovable characters who capture our affection with their naturalness. We understand each figure as we would a friend, and we can usually predict what his reaction to any situation will be. Yet, our amusement is often mingled with a new awareness of individuality which is frequently overlooked within the context of our daily routines.

"Peanuts" is a comment on life in general, and it is a comment specifically on human nature. Through his understated humor, Charles Schulz reminds us that much of life is disappointment, and that our individuality stems from how we pick up the pieces of our shattered illusions and fit them together again. Living demands a price from each of us; what makes us unique is how we each pay that price.

"Peanuts" reminds us that human nature is often perverse. Charlie Brown will wander through life, ineffective and trusting. Everything will turn out right for him in the end, because mankind will always forgive an ineffectual bungler who is consistently blind to shortcomings and unkindnesses. Those who accept mankind for what it is, either blindly or with full awareness and forgiveness, enjoy a peace of mind that other temperaments never find.

Lucy will always find her place in life. Hardheaded, aggressive, and knowing fully the direction in which she is headed, she will forcefully carve her niche. You may not like her, but you will surely respect her.

With our sometimes rueful laughter comes the knowledge that we have

to accept life with a grain of salt and human nature with a shrug. People are what they are, not what we wish them to be, and rejection of that truth is only futile.

The "Peanuts" characters stumble through situation after situation, somehow managing to adapt to the complexities of an adult world and yet retaining their individualities. While expounding great philosophical themes in everyday terms, they still remain children in the contexts in which they are placed and in their reactions to frustrating situations. By remaining in character, they impart discreet messages to young readers on their level, and they subtly prod adults to recognition of the childish qualities that we all retain. Without preaching, a moral value is presented in humorous vein for our contemplation. What we choose to do with it remains a matter of our own conscience.

Recognizing our own pomposities is another effective method used by the comic strip. With skillful artistry, Charles Schulz points out human weaknesses that we all possess to some degree. By poking a hole in the veil of dignity we draw over our shortcomings, he forces us to a reevaluation of our personalities. By demonstrating that our pomposities and selfishnesses are common throughout the human race, "Peanuts" gives us the courage to confront our failings.

The gift of "Peanuts" is threefold. The first gift is in its understated humor. By subtly making its point, the lesson is brought home in an inoffensive manner that promotes high acceptance in the reader. If we are forcefully presented with a fact of personal shortcoming, resentment will narrow the chances of altering our behavior. If we are skillfully led to a conclusion of our own making, chances are greater for a cheerful and successful alteration of our behavior.

The second gift of "Peanuts," observation, is an added blessing when we apply its lesson to our lives. Wry humor in presenting human nature enables us to view fellow humans with a less critical eye in our own relationships. If we understand a person's reaction from what we observe him to be, we are better suited to accept his response to us in that particular context.

The third gift of "Peanuts" should be the most valued. By illustrating humorously that each person is an individual and each possesses failings, Charles Schulz points out that we are all alike beneath our physical differences. The brotherhood of man is not a philosophical theory; it is a real concept that can change our attitudes and enrich our lives.

Humor in comic strips is more than just a general provocation of the senses. It also contributes a meaningful insight into our lives.

Daniel J. Bazin, Jr.

1980 Ernie

Although twenty-eight years have passed since my birthday, my identity to life has been as closely related as the second hand to the minute. Both involved the most important person in my life, my mother, Ernesta; we called her Ernie. She brought me into this world with the sensitivity and kindness of an easygoing Italian woman who loved everyone. I could go to her for any problem, knowing I would be satisfied by her sincerity and love. I loved my mother very much, but I never told her.

On a cold May night in 1978, I received a call from my brother-in-law, John, informing me that Ernie had passed out and was being taken to the hospital.

I arrived at the hospital at the same time as the ambulance. They took my mother into the Emergency Room. I never liked this place; it always projected a morbid feeling. I sat in the waiting room while my sister, Kathy, went in with Mom.

John arrived and sat beside me. Ernie has always looked upon John as her own son whom she loved as much as any of her children.

Kathy entered the room and said I could go in to see Ernie. I walked into the room with the biggest forced smile I could crack. Seeing her in this totally unfamiliar setting made it hard for me not to cry. She had every gadget in the room connected to her like a giant spider web. I got close to her head and kept my smile. I asked if she wanted her oil checked while pretending I was washing her windows. I got no response facially, but could sense a feeling of satisfaction although she was in pain.

The test results showed that her sugar count was eight times higher than normal, and she lacked potassium in her blood. She was admitted to Intensive Care.

I arrived home from work on May 19, 1978; Ernie had been in the hospital for five days. My wife, Christine, met me at the door with tears in her eyes. She painfully told me that the testing showed that Ernie had terminal cancer. The news weakened me; I could feel the tears coming,

but instead I got into the shower to hide the tears from Christine.

I entered Ernie's room that night with my forced smile. She was eating the typical bland hospital food. I reached for a cracker, and she stabbed me with her fork. I knew she wasn't feeling any better, but it was her way of breaking the ice. Kathy and my elder sister, Mary Jean, sat red-eyed in their chairs. Kathy began to speak, but couldn't.

Mary Jean picked it right up and began to talk. She told me what I had already known just to assure Ernie that I knew. Ernie stayed in the hospital until May 27, 1978.

We planned a large Memorial Day celebration for her, but she never saw it. On Memorial Day morning Kathy found Ernie in a coma. The doctor told us she had suffered a stroke and that her chances for living until the next day were 1,000 to 1. Ernie's love of life and her love for her family kept her alive for 27 more days. We maintained a vigil at her bedside throughout this period. I felt close to her during our final days together. I talked to her frequently, hoping for a response. Coming to the realization that Ernie was dying crippled me mentally. Death remained in the tributaries of my mind; I could not find a reasonable explanation which would help me flow back into the main stream. It was Ernie who built a dam to unite her thoughts in one vast reservoir leading to the main stream. Ernie made me understand the meaning of living through her death. She made me understand the never-ending responsibilities and challenges of life.

On June 27, 1978, Kathy, Mary Jean and I were all at her side when Ernie died at age 55.

Ernie gave life to everyone around her. She inspired me in everything I did, and I never took the time to tell her that I loved her. I visited Ernie's gravesite three weeks after her burial. On my knees I cried, clutching the dirt, trying to find some way to communicate, to say, "Mother, I love you." Ernie's death brought reality into my life. She gave me identity at birth and at her death. I love you, Mom.

1981
Burnin' Love

Smells of sour beer and cheap perfume blew through the overflowing tiers of people assembled in the capacious auditorium, forging an unproved mystic bond among their diverse numbers. Camera flashbulbs exploded in the dusky recesses at the least provocation. Excited murmurs and whispered conjecture raced through the crowd like the humming of an overloaded telephone wire, creating a surging, unharnessed electric force. There was a mounting, nearly unbearable tension tangible in the air. This impassioned anticipation could only be relieved by the appearance of the legend, the man who had become the unquestioned idol of these questing hordes. The fervent atmosphere was contagious, and grudgingly even I became caught up in the intense web of emotion prevalent at this Elvis Presley concert.

Searching for a plausible explanation to this seemingly insane phenomenon, I looked about, examining those gathered in the dark arena. There apparently was a common need, some deeply shared longing, that drew us all together as if to partake of mass communion; however, the reason's elusiveness seemed, at first, overwhelming.

Vendors prowled the aisles hawking their wares. Glossy, autographed pictures; cheaply printed programs; and image-emblazoned tee-shirts were eagerly grabbed by the adoring fans. Fights broke out over who would purchase and take possession of neck scarves soaked in Elvis' own sweat. Everyone hungrily yearned to inherit some small part of this famous man's life – to touch some of his magic and hope it would take root in their own lives.

Elvis emulators were scattered throughout the audience. Slicked-back ebony hair and bushy sideburns were affected in personal tribute. Sequined outlines of Elvis covered their denim jackets, and turquoise-encrusted rings decorated their fingers. They all walked with an insolent swagger, taking courage in a manufactured outward resemblance to their hero. Garish looking women in J.C. Penney formal gowns and light-blue eye shadow

adorned the men's arms. These loving couples clung to each other, waiting, as if for salvation, for the show to commence.

Lonely clusters of older women also were impatiently awaiting the arrival of their savior. They had a defeated look in their eyes like they had labored endless years for some ungrateful, petty tyrant calling himself either "boss" or "husband." Shifting uncomfortably on their bench seats, they nonetheless exhibited an animation not evidenced in their routine lives ever before.

Hard, blue-jeaned young people shallowly mocked the entire ritual. Their tough exteriors and snide remarks could not conceal their excitement at the evening's prospects. Drawn in to a congregation they ardently professed to despise, they had unwittingly become full-fledged members of the Elvis Presley Admiration Society.

In reality, the dissonant camaraderie forged in this group was of a melancholy nature. We were all emptily envisioning that some void in our existence would be replenished by watching a man, really just an ordinary man, perform that night. In desperation, we had turned to him for resolution of personal despair and futility. The powerful, high voltage energy that seemed so dangerously stalwart was only echoes originating in restless souls that longed to find a reason.

A sense of foreboding overtook me, and I felt a chilling wave pass over all of us in this timeless cavern. Perhaps we became aware, for just an instant, of the uselessness and irrationality of our actions. The impression was gone as quickly as it had come, but any pleasure I could derive from this concert had fled into fathomless darkness.

1982 Food for Thought

The idea of a short-term goal in relation to art presents somewhat of a dilemma for artists. A short-term project may only last a few years in relationship to a lifetime spent producing art, but the impact of a single short-term work can follow one and taint everything he or she produces for the rest of the artist's professional life. What Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, a short-term work, means in relation to the rest of her professional career is yet to be seen. For any artist to produce a major work of lasting impact and originality is a goal that few artists achieve in their lifetimes.

Judy Chicago, however, has managed to produce a major work with a great amount of critical acclaim. Her piece, *The Dinner Party*, was introduced in a gallery in Chicago, Illinois, on September 13, 1981. Judy Chicago began in 1974 to create a series of plates commemorating great women in history. The series was originally titled *Twenty-Five Women Who Were Eaten Alive*. The project began to branch out, however, encompassing many women whose existences (real or mythological) had influenced the direction of the cultural development of various societies. Many different art forms, such as ceramics and needlework, usually considered to be chiefly women's or domestic art forms, were utilized in the sculpture.

The finished piece, titled *The Dinner Party*, consists of a large, triangular banquet table, forty-eight feet on each side, with thirty-nine place settings. White tiles set in the center of the structure's floor are signed with about a thousand names of famous women in history. A place setting consists of a plate and a hand-embroidered place mat for each woman represented. The entire work took Judy Chicago's efforts along with those of a crew of artisans and a volunteer force of four hundred people and several years to complete. The intent, implementation and critical impact from both men and women towards *The Dinner Party* all play a very important role in making the piece a monumental sculpture of lasting importance.

Judy Chicago is a feminist artist who believes that great women in history and culture could be legitimately represented by a feminine inter-

pretation of that history. Up to the twentieth century, most art representing women had been produced by male artists. Judy Chicago set out to define great women in terms of women. Ceramics, needlework, sculpture, and paint were all employed to depict the colorful, butterfly vaginas of women in history. Appropriately enough, Chicago also used objects most women deal with on an everyday basis—plates, tablecloths, silverware, and goblets. She took mundane objects and raised them to the level of art to teach people women's history by using a women's world.

For example, the conservative poet, Emily Dickinson, is represented by a plate with a very stiff, pink-laced vulva. Georgia O'Keeffe, the artist, is represented by a plate showing bone and flower forms in muted grays and mauves, an artful tribute to O'Keeffe's own colors and illusions. The use of the plates representing vaginas plays an important role in the intent of *The Dinner Party*. By using female symbols and genitalia, Chicago relates the entire work to the woman's world. It is true that few people are comfortable viewing female genitalia the way Chicago presents it. To see these vaginas in thirty-nine colorful and exciting forms is a social shock to many people. Chicago celebrates women's bodies in a way that the male-oriented art world has always frowned upon. She turns her plates into abstract symbols of fertility and power, just as penises have been represented in skyscrapers, guns, and rocket ships. Chicago's perspective, however, does not have to be accepted or agreed upon. All she attempts to do is to suggest another look at portions of history and societies through feminine eyes.

The way in which Chicago depicts these great women brings a certain amount of historical perspective to each individual shown. Combined in many of the plates is the story of that particular woman's life. For example, the plate depicting Sojourner Truth shows a range of emotions felt by this black woman as she helped the slaves escape to the safety of the North from the pre-Civil War South. The plate consists of a three-sided head: the center face suggests an African mask of a lioness, another face is weeping and downcast, and the third face is that of a militant fighter whose clenched fist and upraised arm rise from her breast as one image. Saint Bridget's plate is a fiery-orange and green tree of life, which suggests the symbolic union of her politically torn Ireland. These images, among others, help to illustrate the history in which these women participated. When the symbols in the plates are interpreted, viewers can understand that portion of history from the artist's perspective.

Would poet Emily Dickinson discuss birth control with Margaret Sanger? Would author Virginia Woolf debate social ills with Queen Elizabeth? Would

lesbian Natalie Barney have her arm around suffragette Susan B. Anthony? The visualizations of such fantasies move the viewers to listen carefully to Chicago's guests as their muted voices begin to mingle. The use of the dinner party as a setting for the sculpture's theme allows the viewers some very interesting fantasies of their own. Imaginary invitation lists can be conjured up in each observer's mind. *The Dinner Party* allows a connective thread to bind the different eras of women together—from Ishtar, the ancient goddess, to the twentieth century artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. Some critics have likened *The Dinner Party* to a sexual Seder for women where the history of women instead of the history of the Jews is kept alive. Other critics have called the work a feminine Last Supper where the sexual organs of women enter a transubstantiation of the flesh into an existence more spiritual, more eternal. If the critics have agreed on anything at all concerning *The Dinner Party*, then, it is that they have agreed to disagree.

Not all the responses to the sculpture are positive. There are problems for the sophisticated feminists. Some of the histories presented are not that well researched. Despite the women that are presented, there are some notable exceptions: Gertrude Stein, Marie Curie, and black anarchist Lucy Parsons are a few heroines who are conspicuous by their absences. Some feminists have claimed that it is just as elitist to celebrate heroines as it is to celebrate heroes. *The Dinner Party*, however, can be considered a success despite the feminists' criticisms because Chicago's intent of reviewing history from a feminine angle does encourage viewers to rethink women's places in history and culture. It would seem that Chicago has anticipated the obvious reactions of her critics.

The furious response of male art critics, however, is another matter. Their response has been vicious and antagonistic in regards to the sculpture. A few of those critiques by male art critics have brought in hundreds of protests from women all over the country. As Rebecca West once wrote to men who would make such vicious attacks on liberated women: "...those who despise us for our female organs and those who envy us for them. The first," she said, "chastises us with whips, the second chastises us with scorpions." Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* survives both kinds of attacks because women are becoming more steadfastly curious about women's artists' perceptions of the female. There is also a certain amount of grandiloquence that can be afforded in this case to Chicago. Whereas some critics contend that the contrivance of the sculpture is too intense, too poignant, there is a great deal of evidence that proves a new work of classical art must be intense, must be poignant to allow artists to pioneer the unexplored terrain of that particular area. Although truly historic works

by women artists are few and far between, Judy Chicago has managed to secure her place at the table. She has produced a major work of originality and lasting importance.

A short-term work of art of *The Dinner Party's* magnitude may complicate the rest of Chicago's career. Such a major early work in any artist's career can leave future projects invisible in its shadow. The long-lasting importance of *The Dinner Party* as a major piece of women's art can jeopardize future works' immediate importance. Judy Chicago may find herself inexorably chained to *The Dinner Party* as Michelangelo was chained to his Sistine Chapel ceiling or Picasso to cubism. What Chicago needs now is some distance between herself and her work. She needs to allow *The Dinner Party* to stand alone on its tour of the United States and Canada. Only then can objective critiques of the work be considered valid. Only then can Judy Chicago be judged as an artist connected to history.

1983

The Schizophrenic Closet

Opening my closet discloses me. I'm folded into the fabrics and tucked, heel and toe, in the shoes. Sometimes I close myself down into boxes. Each item on the left side of my closet has work. My favorite wool skirt hangs where I can grab it, its camel color accumulating the weekly wear. It's my security blanket, warming me when my tummy hurts, protecting me when I have something new or difficult to do. Some days my blue-jean skirt and I venture together into the fray; we are survivors. On other days I lovingly spare its poor threads. There are days, I admit, when I wonder what people think of woman who wears a skirt with a history.

I have shirts, jewels of silk, in sapphire, amethyst, turquoise and ruby. When I spend whole days in their royal splendor, they can hardly be persuaded to step aside for a nighttime granny gown. My passport black dress would travel anywhere at a moment's notice, if it could get clearance to depart the hanger. Next to it, pockety slacks, pressed into almost daily adventure, don't understand the nighttime madness of cloth that believes it is Marlene Dietrich, all dressed up with no place to go.

Clothes that are destined to spend time with me whisper when we meet in a store. They ask for me, knowing I never easily discard an old friend. When they are purchased, they hang around outside the closet door for awhile until they feel ready to weave their way in. My navy blue suit was like that. When I finally accepted its classic good looks, it rewarded me with uniform comfort and took each silk shirt to its heart.

My clothes aren't expected to worry about coordination, about appropriate accessories, or which colors become me. Colors are chosen for the ability to speak for themselves, but each has a little of its complement mixed in so it isn't too loud.

These clothes serve me, and I take them for granted as part of the warp and woof of my life. They have a way of suiting themselves to the occasion without having to consult me.

Shoes sit, row upon row, on the shelf on the left and discuss civilization and women's place in the world. Some are definitely of the opinion

that I should be seen and hurt. They are losing ground lately to the ones who like to think they aren't too high to go anywhere or do anything.

My shoes are my pride. I love the leather; I love the sight and smell of the shine their colors take. Many of the styles now in my possession mimic those popular when I first had money to spend on shoes.

In winter the strappy little shoes, that were so anxious to be out and about, stay in their cozy compartments and dream of sunny days. Boots are the obvious answer for a person who can't be bothered by weather. When polished, my boots come alive in my hands, their leathery fragrance reminding me of how strong and worthy they are and how, though they will serve me no matter what, I really should tend them better. If poverty catches me, if I have nothing, I shall have boots to the end.

The left side of my closet is orderly, with places for clothing, and places for shoes. I trust it; it puts me together and turns me out in minutes flat.

Be careful if you open the right side of my closet. Its odd overflow of small apartment living might fall out on you. Things tend to pile into baskets and bags and stuff themselves in, purposely filling every inch of spare space.

The top shelf chronicles whatever art is in my blood. The amateur emotions trapped in the stack haven't receded far enough in time for me to throw them away. On the very top new canvases, frightening in their whiteness, wait for a commitment.

Under the heap, spending life as a foundation, are heavy boxes of house and decorating magazines so musty and old they would stuff my head if I dared to page through them. They moved to my apartment on the arms of a strong friend who, just once, looked into a box to see under what he was laboring. He was such a good friend he carried them anyway. "I need them," I said, and I do. They are the paper houses I lusted after before I decided to live in the house in my head.

The inhabitants of the right side of my closet jostle and position themselves for the little attention they receive. I don't know what to do with them. They won't go away and they won't say why.

The right side of my closet is past, and maybe its future. The left side sustains me every day. If you were to look at the doors of my closet at this very moment, the right side is closed; the left side is open.

The Game Room, late 1970s.



Bill McCullough

1984
Annie and Me

Today
 we walk
On winter's face.
She,
 many small steps
 in front,
Her tiny feet
 pocking
The feathery white water.
I
 keep pace-
Alone
 in grown up thought.
(She)
 in
Her space (I)
 in
 mine.
My vision's scattered;
Hers whole.
At a distance
I can easily make up
(If I choose)
I listen
 as she
Jabbers
 of alternate dreams.
Tomorrow,
 blinded no more
By snow,

I will not see her.
Her steps will
lengthen.

She will move
From my life
Forever.

1985
Morning Song

The sun,
Having not yet broken fast
Was up nonetheless
And making hurried preparations
For his part in the day;
Hurried
Because the birds
(Unable to hold it any longer)
Were bathing themselves,
 each other,
 and the morning in song.
The baby, you and I
Stir simultaneously.
I slowly become aware
 of my awareness
And dreams become reality.
Before the day's events
Call upon me,
Offering me personal omnipotence
And public indifference,
Wee moments are mine
To converse groggily with creation.
With you
Misty-eyed and soft,
Trusting our life together
By your restful sleep;
With our son,
His heart strong
And vision true
To the new sensations of his world,

I stretch,
And think of the sun's dewy radiance,
Of the wonders
The robin's song calls forth.
Remembering only vaguely the time,
I stretch again
 hesitate
 and decide
Our table of joy
Needs one more spoon.
I like the robins
Very much
But I love you.
I like the robins
But I love you
 very much.

1986 Eulogy

We were the Two Musketeers; we could never find a third to meet our rigid standards. We would win all battles and vanquish all foes; our cunning was known throughout the land. We would be called upon to right all wrongs. What a well matched pair we were! Our castle, its turrets reaching the sky, and our vast kingdom made rulers from other provinces envious. My memories are colored with reds and yellows; I have chosen not to recall all the blues and grays.

My father was a tall, gentle Peter Pan of a man who had charm and brains, an unbeatable combination. I was taught kindness, love, and sharing. He wanted me to be some of the things he was, and he wanted me to be all that he was not. I emulated his actions and speech, sometimes to my mother's chagrin. He prepared me for the joys in life, not for the heartaches. I truly believe he'd had enough pain for both of us, though I was never sure what the real pain was.

Our dirt-paved road held three houses: ours, a neighbor's on the corner, and another at the road's end. The corner house was a two-story frame structure with black shutters. Because some of the shutters were missing, the others looked like badly applied eye makeup. At the end of the road was a typical, 1940s ultramodern ranch. Our little house was a gingerbread cottage, not a palatial estate by any means.

In our miniature back yard was hand-built bench with a very high back. Though made from wood of undetermined types from unknown forests, its finish was dark and smooth. The seat was worn from many days of holding various bottoms. To visualize it now, I see a wooden Valentine, but then it was my Magic Seat. My father and I would sit there with only our imaginations to guide us in our visits to far away places. We could be anyone we wanted to be; all it took was concentration. Perhaps this was my Dad's way to compensate for the fact that we were poor, but I adored the experiences. When I tried to explain the bench to those who would listen, they just laughed at me. My father was the only one who truly understood.

My world was that grassless sector of yard. I played there often and

quite happily. When times grew difficult or upsetting, as sometimes they would do, I would seek my father, and we would spend a few minutes on our seat. It never failed to make things better for me.

Our journeys were wondrous adventures, shared only by us. I clearly remember the Christmas Eve we sat in the evening chill, hands kept warm by new mittens, and traveled silently to Bethlehem. We saw the baby Jesus in the manger; I could smell the stable's straw, and I could see the shining star. The Wise Men were adorned with robes of silk and gold; I was awed at the beauty. After a summer rain we journeyed through space to the moon where I learned the names of nine planets, and I saw each one through the window of the rocket ship I captained. We were pirates and cowboys, Long John Silver and Hopalong Cassidy. We hoisted the sails on our seaworthy vessel; I sometimes made my father walk the plank, and he would always oblige. As saddled ponies hit the trail, we were certain that the rewards for all desperados would be ours. There was no place our Magic Seat could not take us. They were my world, these games.

Then, one day life dealt me a bad hand. My father was leaving, going away forever. I was the victim of the great adult experience: divorce. I heard the words, but I didn't understand them; maybe it was best. How could be best friend leave me alone? Who would play the game with me? Who would teach me to swing from a vine like Tarzan? At five years of age I'd traveled the world, yet I was inexperienced in the pain of reality. I ran to the back yard.

Days later, an old green truck limped into our driveway to pick up our furniture. My mother and I were moving to another place. I sat on the bench and cried for hours. I tried to use my mind to make my Dad return. All my wishing did no good; my father did not appear. The Magic Seat didn't work without him.

Though years have passed, I sometimes allow myself to think of the bench. It did not make the move with us, and I have no idea what happened to it. I lost contact with my father, though I spoke briefly with him before his death. I couldn't bring myself to inquire about the Magic Seat, nor did I thank him for my happiest memories. He was gone; he left with no final words. I like to think his life did not end, but that it merely continued in one of the places we had visited together.

I can only hope that someone learned the secret of that warm, wooden time machine and that he or she used it to see the things I did. The Magic Seat, used properly, enabled me to view a world few could imagine. How sad I cannot pass on the joy of our journeys and the thrill of the Magic Seat to some child who needs them. Perhaps, it was only my need that made them so important. I'll never know.

Good-bye D'Artagnan! Thank you for my kingdom of fantasy.

1987

A Room with no Future

In the early morning hours, gray winter sunlight filters through the nicotine-stained glass windows, transforming the room where I live into a jaundiced cathedral. The sun's murky light falls on my face. I awaken with a start, believing that I am home. Fragments of the dream skitter back into the recesses of my unconscious as I realize that I am still here in the Department of Correction. The feeling is no less disappointing than it would be if St. Peter were to swing wide the pearly gate only to discover the promised land on fire. The gate behind has closed and locked. The waking nightmare of prison flows on uninterrupted.

I have three roommates, and we all sleep within three feet of each other. While the others slumber, restless wayfarers in the Freudian otherworld, I light a Camel, inhale deeply and reach up to unbolt one of the windows. The smoke curls around once and escapes outside on a wave of hot dry air like the living fleeing a mausoleum. These rare moments of solitude are the only semblance of privacy that the state will allow.

Some of us are here justly, some unjustly. It is doubtful if anyone of us was locked up for living responsibly, so regardless of the degree of irresponsibility or deliberate offense, we are all punished together: helpless derelicts and murderers, Coke machine vandals and rapists, drunk drivers and child molesters, first offenders and career criminals, accountants and gang warriors, schoolteachers and sociopaths, factory workers and extortionists. We are all ghosts locked away in society's attic, forgotten by all but the few who still write sometimes.

From the top bunk where I lie smoking the room appears a cluttered myriad of institutional uniformity and personal identity. Crammed into a mere 9'x14' cell are two sets of bunk beds, four standing wall lockers, and four wooden nightstands with drawers, all alike. Three feet of neutral living space run up the center of the room, the state's version of the proverbial sardine can. I chuckle to myself, recalling the time I visited the Detroit Zoo when it had fallen into a state of disrepair. The animals were suffering

from overcrowding and neglect. Many were underfed and sick. They milled sluggishly about in their confined areas. In their powerlessness they silently pled for help from the passing visitors. An enraged public cried out to close the zoo in the name of decency. In response the money was raised to upgrade the zoo; the animals were given a future. Asleep on the next bunk, my roommate snores loudly and rolls over, so close I flinch as his breath reaches me. In retaliation I blow a flurry of smoke rings at him. I return to my thoughts, musing over the fact that, unlike the animal's cage, my room has no future.

The personal effects of four men who never would have associated with each other were it not for their transplantation here are scattered about in disarray. The floor is littered with shoes, state issued work boots and flip-flops. The lockers are piled high with coats. The nightstands are bestrewn with wadded up blue state clothes, a Bible, textbooks, pens and newspapers. On one, an abandoned game of solitaire waits patiently to be finished. Crumpled centerfolds recline in the shadows. A mouse, delighted with its find, is contentedly nibbling stray M&Ms under the bed.

Pictures of the ones left far behind smile out from cigarette pack frames holding them upright. The innocent eyes of wives, children and parents never see the vulgarity lived out before them as the correctional machine grinds the souls of those who live here. They never smell the mildewed socks, the garbage, the Spam can ashtrays, or the stench of the adjoining sewage treatment plant. They never feel, never hope, never hate, never cry. They are two-dimensional reminders of a past time when things were, somehow, less complicated. The photographs remind us of how grateful we should have been for that simplicity but weren't, how much we could have shared and didn't, how much we might have loved and wouldn't, and how much different we and they must be now.

For these few moments stillness hangs empty in the early morning hours, a thin disguise for the storm to come. The men in blue uniform, not substantially different from our own, will begin bellowing orders and threats over the PA system at full volume telling us when to get up, when to eat, when to sit down, when to stand up, when to smoke, when to use the toilet, when to line up and march in columns of two, when to shower and when to go to bed. Another day, just like yesterday and just like tomorrow, will begin once more, a ditto of time since and time to come.

1988

A Crossroad in the Night

It was cold and damp on that dark evening of September 13, 1984. Near the Hai-Son River in a poor, little village of fishermen, there were five strangers in the corner of a house by the river. They looked pale and frightened, full of suspicion. The forty-year-old man in the worn out clothing looked around in suspense for the time to finally come. He took a few steps forward and backward. Sometimes he looked through the slot in the wall to the darkness. Then he sat down next to his wife, again keeping very quiet. The lady's hands embraced a nine-month-old child, and sitting next to her were two boys about four years old looking very frightened.

The weak, unsteady light which came from the lamp in the living room was about to be extinguished by the blowing wind. From the neighborhood came dogs barking and the steps of someone walking in the quiet night. About two miles away by the river stood a police station with all kinds of light against the night and all kinds of armaments to capture or kill the people who tried to escape from Viet-Nam along that route.

Tonight, in this village, something was happening. There were many strangers quietly coming from many different places. Some had come here a few days ago; most of them just came today. Like the five people in that house, they stayed in small groups in many houses, waiting for the right time to escape by means of the river. Tonight was a remarkable night for them. Their fates were at a crossroad! One road would lead to freedom; the other would lead to death. Death is always easier than escape. For this reason they were frightened each and every second! Just one small mistake, and their bodies would become food for the fish in the sea.

1989
Ethics

In ethics class so many years ago
our teacher asked this question every fall:
if there were a fire in a museum
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting
or an old woman who hadn't many
years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs
caring little for pictures or old age
we'd opt one year for life, the next for art
and always halfheartedly. Sometimes
the woman borrowed my grandmother's face
leaving her usual kitchen to wander
some drafty, half-imagined museum.
One year, feeling clever, I replied
why not let the woman decide herself?
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews
the burdens of responsibility.
This fall in a real museum I stand
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,
or nearly so, myself. The colors
within this frame are darker than autumn,
darker even than winter — the browns of earth,
though earth's most radiant elements burn
through the canvas. I know now that woman
and painting and season are almost one
and all beyond saving by children.

– Linda Pastan (b. 1932)

The value of life is a question that has been debated for centuries. In “Ethics,” Linda Pastan attaches a personal perspective to the question. Within the poem, the speaker, a woman, remembers that as a child she

was asked every year in school to make a hypothetical decision on the value of life by comparing it to the value of great art. As the poem moves into the present, the speaker, now middle-aged, looks at the question again. Now able to give an answer, she understands why children cannot answer such abstract questions. This fact, then, becomes the central idea of the poem; because human life on Earth is of a temporal nature, its value is relevant to age, experience, and perspective, and has no "right" answer.

Because the poem is written in free verse and continuous form, Pastan is not confined to certain poetic structures. The breaks in the poem occur in meaning and in the divisions between thoughts and ideas. The major breaks between past and present support the central ideas of the poem as a whole, while the breaks within these two sections help to enhance the meaning of these individual sections.

The poem begins with a flashback suggestive of the once-upon-a-time phrase that begins many children's stories. In fact, the first section of the poem is about children. Every year in the speaker's ethics class, the teacher would ask the students to choose between saving a famous painting or an old woman. The children were unable to make responsible decisions because they did not fully understand the seriousness of the hypothetical situation. Pastan says the children were restless and, perhaps, bored with the whole situation. The children did not care about life or art, and this was reflected in their lighthearted answer to the teacher's question. They were too young to appreciate life or great art and too inexperienced to comprehend the fragile nature of either one.

Pastan relies on the imagery that comes from reader connotations of a Rembrandt painting, an old woman, a usual kitchen, and a drafty museum. In this way, the poem truly becomes a personal experience enriched by the images the reader creates. Even though this first section uses little descriptive imagery, readers are able to vividly picture the scene by drawing upon their own memories of school. Because children concentrate most of their attention on immediate situations in the physical world, they are rendered incapable of making decisions of mortal or transcendent consequence. Pastan illustrates this physical perception with the use of the word *restless* to suggest the children's shifting and shuffling. The phrase "hard chairs," with its harsh consonants, suggests how uncomfortable the chairs were for the children.

The metrical scheme of the first two lines, strict iambic pentameter, reflects the very rigid tradition of ethics. However, after this initial example, the poem falls into the pattern of free verse which represents the subject matter of the poem. Humans usually do not think, question, or

experience according to a prescribed pattern. Occasionally, however, patterns do become part of human experience, and this fact is represented in line eight with singsong rhythm that reflects the children's lighthearted answers.

The first section of the poem presents the situation on which the central idea of the poem is based. It is a memory that comes to the speaker's mind because it directly applies to her current situation. The poem begins its cycle by beginning in the fall. The cycle is completed in the last section of the poem as the speaker is in a real museum in the fall. As a child, the speaker used her grandmother's face to bring the impersonal situation into a personal one. As an adult, because of her own age, the speaker does not need to make the situation relevant. The museum in the teacher's question also moves from being hypothetical to being real in the speaker's life.

In the first section, the colon at the end of line two indicates a pause before the presentation of the question. The classifying phrase which starts on line five works to diminish the image of the old woman. The short syllables and flowing consonants speed up the way the phrase is read. By placing the phrase "Rembrandt painting" at the end of the line, Pastan forces the image to linger in the mind of her readers. In addition, the phrase "Rembrandt painting" has hard consonants and many syllables that make it read slower.

Second only to the comment at the end of the poem, the most emotional statement of the entire poem is in line fourteen, "why not let the woman decide herself." This phrase is also set off from the rest of the poem to help it stay in the reader's mind. Within the poem it is a trite answer that "eschews" responsibility. The reader may interpret it as a direct statement about the woman in the museum; and that interpretation makes it no more than a taunting answer. However, if the reader feels that the statement suggests any woman in any situation, then it becomes a comment on the right of women to determine their own fate.

The second section of the poem shows an example of the idea and a comment about the situation presented in the first section. The speaker matures from being a child who tries to answer a question thoroughly irrelevant to her to being an adult who comments on childhood and life based on her experience. Within this second section, the poem shifts to the present. The speaker is standing in a museum before a Rembrandt. This situation causes her to re-examine her ethics teacher's question. The question now takes on the seriousness it lacked from a child's perspective. Yet, the comment she makes does not give a direct answer to the teacher's

question, but rather is an answer about the temporal nature of things connected to earthly life.

The second section of the poem contains the strongest imagery of the entire poem. In line twenty through twenty-three, the speaker is obviously describing the painting. Rembrandt's paintings have a strong interplay between light and dark. In the poem, this interplay becomes "... the browns of earth, / though earth's most radiant elements burn / through the canvas." On a symbolic level, this description could be the speaker herself. "The colors / within this frame" could be the memories of experiences she has within her. The autumn is then symbolic of the speaker's middle age. The fact that "the colors / are darker than autumn" and that "earth's most radiant elements burn" suggests, perhaps, that even though she is still alive, the speaker has already lived through experiences worse than death, hence "darker even than winter"

The tone of the poem, from the lack of powerful imagery, depends much on the reader's interpretation of the speaker's situation. The literal meaning of the poem is the choice between saving a Rembrandt or a woman's life. The first response to this is a childlike sarcasm directed toward a teacher. As the speaker matures and sees the situation from another perspective, the sarcasm changes to a passive acceptance of the situation. One does not feel hostile, purposeful, or even active emotion.

The poem is not written in an obviously poetic style, and it is the straightforward style which makes it easy to read. Despite the fact that there is not much descriptive imagery, every word contributes to the meaning. In fact, the emphasis placed on each word creates some reader speculation at the end of the poem. The word woman in line twenty-three can have two meanings. It can represent the woman speaker, or it can represent human life. Both meanings work within the poem. The speaker, toward the end of the poem, is thinking of her own situation; and the old woman in the hypothetical question represents human life.

At the very end of the poem, the flowing rhythm of the phrase "woman and painting and season" brings together three very different concepts into a unified image. Also children lump together the dark, bleak image of the Rembrandt, the old woman, and fall – or anything beyond their immediate situation. Children lack the knowledge or responsibility to answer questions which require the crucial element of experience. When the speaker realized this in the poem, the lack of emotion in her statement suggests a sadness as she understands how the imaginary woman might have felt and how children would not be able to appreciate her (the speaker) either.

Ethics are based upon asking and answering questions. The poem

also asks a question with the teacher's remark at the beginning. Who wins in a comparison between life and great art? In the poem the only answer is given at the end. In the first section, the answers the children give show that they think there really is an answer to the teacher's question. They do not understand that these things are out of the reach of human influence. The truth of this statement is found in the poem because nowhere in the poem is one chosen over the other as a final, unchanging answer.

The final statement of the poem can be taken very literally because children (and adults) have no control over life, art, and nature. On a figurative level, where the meaning of the poem is found, the poem says mortality, beauty, and the cycles of nature are too large to be controlled by human decision.

Claire Blackburn

Brian Mulligan

Tom Teets

1990

What Is Brown?

Brown is Molasses,
A pecan,
An echo in
A canyon,
A cookie,
The smoothest color
You can see.
Brown is thick steak
Eaten with zest
At a family gathering
On a day of rest.
Brown is subtle
Brown is soft
It's autumn leaves
And hay in the loft.
Brown is crackling
Brown is crunch
The gooey peanut butter
In a paper bag lunch.
Brown is a brownie
And also an owl
Brown is the grumble
Of a grizzly bear's growl.
Brown is the satin fur
Of the slippery otter
The rapid pace
Of a thoroughbred trotter.
And in the winter
When the snow is churning
Brown is the aroma
Of oakwood burning.

Sharon White

1991
Up, Up and Away

May the wind welcome you with softness
May the sun bless you with his warm hands.

May you fly so high and so well
that God joins you in laughter.

And may He set you gently back again
into the loving arms of Mother Earth.

(Balloonists' Irish Blessing)

Most people only fantasize about flying in a hot air balloon. The fantasy becoming a reality is unimaginable. Goosebumps, chattering teeth, champagne, propane, and predawn launchings are the things ballooning is made of. Balloonists soon learn to arise early in anticipation of favorable winds and the good wishes of the gods.

In theory, a balloon can be launched from anywhere; in practice, there are some considerations that make some places much more promising than others. An open grassy area is ideal. A city park or school yard will be fine, as long as there are no power lines or trees nearby. Ideally there will be winds of less than seven miles per hour. Balloons do not have wheels or brakes for landing; therefore, the less wind upon landing the better.

The balloon system consists of the envelope, the multicolored fabric ball; the basket, usually made of wicker; the burner, used to heat the ambient air inside the envelope; the three fuel tanks, full of propane; the fan, gasoline powered, that is used to blow ambient air into the envelope during the launch; and, of course, the three man/woman crew.

The actual launch is a ballet of the crew members. The movements of each member are choreographed and performed with precision. The basket is laid on its side, and the envelope is connected to the basket with cable. The envelope is then spread out flat upon the field. At this point the balloon is just so much fabric, wrinkled and lifeless on the grass. It shows none of its eventual beauty and is much like a butterfly ready to emerge

from a cocoon. Two crew members hold the mouth of the balloon open while the fan blows the outside air into the balloon to partially inflate it. Now the balloon begins to take shape and some hint of its beauty becomes apparent.

A crowd has been gathering in anticipation of this unusual event. Cars are stopped along the highway, and people are walking toward the balloon. The balloon is something mystic in this early morning light, a giant rising up among us. People stand in silence, or speak only in whispers, mesmerized by the awakening of this colorful giant.

Suddenly the pilot fires her dragon. The flame shoots into the envelope with a roar. The crowd draws back in fear. The pilot fires the burner several more times. Each time, the balloon grows rounder and begins to rise. The fan is turned off. The crew holds the basket to the ground until ready for lift off. As the pilot continues to aim the fire breathing dragon into the envelope, the balloon takes shape and the giant butterfly forms above the basket. The only sounds are the whispered comments of the crowd and the occasional roar of the dragon. When the pilot feels the balloon has enough lift, is light enough to fly, she calls for "hands off" and with the dragon breathing hard, she is up, up and away.

The launch is perfect, and the sun is just above the horizon. Goosebumps appear. The beauty brings forth tears and chattering teeth. Soon a deer runs out of the woods and bounds across a corn field. Birds are singing and some are fleeing in fear. As the balloon ascends, more and more of the countryside becomes visible. It is a fairy tale come alive: "We're off to see the wizard" Toy houses, cars, and animals are spread out in the panorama below. Dogs are barking and pigs are squealing. It is amazing how sound travels up. Voices of bystanders are clear and easy to hear until the balloon is more than 500 feet above the ground. The balloon ascends to around 2,500 feet. The ground haze is ruining part of the view, and there is no one to talk to. The silence is broken only by the fire breathing dragon roaring every minute or so. What serenity, what tranquillity; the return to earth is not too enticing.

It is hard to believe it is time to begin looking for a landing spot. Two hours pass quickly when such beauty is being enjoyed. Landing places, like launching places, are theoretically anywhere. Ideally a place similar to the launch area will be found. A pasture with clear access to a road, and free of cows, is spotted. A rope attached to the crown of the balloon is pulled, opening a vent, and hot air spills out. The balloon descends and gently kisses the ground.

As the hot air leaves the balloon, the beautiful butterfly begins to wilt. Eventually all air is expelled, and the deflated balloon is put back into the chase vehicle for another day. The chase crew, who have been following the balloon in a van, arrive with the traditional bottle of champagne. There are sips of champagne all around and a general toast to the gods, thanking them for a safe flight and soft landing.

1992
Witness to the Wind

On a moonlit night, not so dark and
not so long ago...
I was witness to the wind...
as it caressed dead leaves
that lie upon the forest floor.

It touched them, lightly at first,
teasing them...
and somehow enchanting them to rise...
To arise and dance and then...
to dance some more.

Tiny whirlwinds of gold and brown,
they tumbled and they stumbled...
as they danced around...
and around above the ground.
They danced their dance . . . a silent ballet.

Then, in a moment so quiet, yet so loud,
There came upon the wood . . . a shadow . . . a cloud.
And through the trees, a faint mist touched the leaves.
Slowing the tiny dancers...
Who had taken over the floor.

In slow motion they danced now,
as the rain kissed them and...
And bade them . . . lie down, sweet leaves...
Lie down sweet leaves...
And dance no more.

I was witness to the wind...

On that moonlit autumn night...

Not so dark, and not so long ago.

And, witness to the wind...

They danced till the end...

Their tiny dance for me.

1993
Hunger

Talking, smiling
Tame
A polite arm's length apart
When my attention flickered
Your stranger's smile had become familiar

In that pause of recognition
Did you have any clue
I wanted to reach across the distance between us
Sink long fangs into you
Suck out your brains
And lick my lips
Sated
Rip a hole in your chest
Crawl through
And dive in
Triumphant

I wanted to shake you up
Wake you up
Make you understand
This woman's hunger is raw

The raw color and texture
Of burnt fields in the spring
Still hot and smoking
At sunset

The raw, musky, iron scent
Of birth blood
Full and hot blood of the womb

The raw screech of a banshee
Careening through the night
Through the fog
To slice its way up your spine

Wake up
Understand
How raw

On the polite day
That my smile turns to a growl and
My open hand shoots for your throat

Don't panic

Be still a beat
And suck in one breath of the air
Heated by my nearness
Then sink your teeth hard
Into my neck
Right at the nape
Just under my hair
And rip us both
Down
Deep
Into this woman's hunger

1994
The Fisherman

As we rowed the slope out to the fishing boat, Norleif was looking out over the sea with a sensitivity that was almost touching, while he pulled his big, rough hand through his thin and weather-beaten hair. His eyes reflected old, buried hardship but did for the moment not reveal any new secrets beyond the one of father and brothers out there somewhere in the deep blue masses, gone in a time that was almost forgotten.

When we had left the house, the dawn was still held back by the weak June darkness, and the end of the sea could not be seen, but as we had reached the little harbor after a walk of the better part of a mile, the edges of the sun had slowly been revealed. The light had changed the lands and the sea to a more predictable and almost inviting setting. Once on board, the boat was prepared in a few minutes. Norleif started the gaslight to fire up the engine; we undid the ties and left the protecting horseshoe shaped harbor behind.

He was in close touch with the freedom of his profession. The pride and dedication in a heritage that was passed down since generations never seemed to leave his mind, as I glanced at him. Norleif was a very big man. Even though he was in his early seventies, there were not many visual signs of aging at the first impression. His hold was proud, and his whole appearance constituted respect. His hands, so rough, and almost the size of large frying pans, only occasionally touched the rudder as we entered the open waters. Even though he had not shaved for a few days, his face had a soft, deeply wise look. As I can recollect, somehow, it appeared like he was constantly surrounded with a slight smell of fish aroma.

His experiences were greater than what would conclude a normal lifetime, but his respect for the sea was inevitable. He saw the ocean as the most dangerous and mysterious area of empty spaces, but he also saw a pure beauty always close to his heart, even though the whole male side of his family were lost out in the waves of that same sea. He was probably bound to die out there as well one day, I thought to myself.

Suddenly, the engine lost its rhythm and took on an almost bizarre tone, which made him wrinkle his eyebrows in a short second of confusion, before he bent down over the small indoor compartment at the front to the boat. He adjusted one of many small oil dripping wheels, which brought the vessel's motor pace back to a more humble melody. Norleif's nose wings were flapping through his sniffing attempt to analyze the problem, as he looked at me with a kind of amused expression on his face.

We were approaching the predetermined spot for the morning. He slowed down, and I got ready to haul out my fishing gear. The echo machine made some fuzzing noises in the wandering over the sea bottom to indicate a cod school's presence. He gave me a sign, and I let go of the line, which on the last six yards had hook strings attached about every foot. On every hook sat a piece of plastic, which by the fish would be identified as an appetizing piece of shrimp. I took a step back. The fish aroma was sticking in my nose, as the weight hit bottom.

The still empty bins around me had layers of old fish slime stuck to the sides, and could probably never had come clean even if we would have been worried about it. At the moment, I was more concerned with hauling up the line a few feet in order to tempt the little sea creatures, but the thought of old, rotten guts slipped my mind anyway.

I was concentrating on my assignment, but Norleif was already pulling the cods out of the water before I even had any kind of approach on my bait. There was a mild shining of satisfaction in his eyes, maybe as strong as fifty years ago. He teased me in his own quiet way, about not being very lucky at the moment, and gave me a smile so wide, that his chew tobacco almost fell out from behind his upper lip. After a few hours of total humiliation, I let myself slip for a second, and bent over to grab the thermos. The coffee tasted like rotten ferret, but I did not pay attention to the flavor of old, almost cold liquid in a cracked thermos. My hands were trembling of excitement, even though my luck was not there.

He had pulled up a ton of fish, while my success only pertained to a few cods. The bins were full, in difference from the same morning. I went back to the rod wheel, grabbed the handle to haul it all up a last time.

"Might as well just take it easy and let him finish," I thought to myself. However, the rod wheel did not move. I managed to gain Norleif's attention, making him aware of that I was stuck on something at the bottom. He stomped over to the side of me, as he grabbed the line in order to pull the hooks loose. He looked up at me with an interesting expression on his face.

"This is no bottom, you have a fighter cod on this line," he said, and he smiled. My eyeballs almost popped out of their sockets in surprise, as he,

with only the slightest strain, started to weave in the line that I had not been able to even move. I could detect that he had a minor struggle, but this man was stronger than I ever could have imagined. After what seemed like an eternity, the shining of the fish was visible in the dark water. I was almost in shock when he pulled the huge monster on board, and the feeling was to never be forgotten. We laughed, and he made it ironically clear that it was time to go.

He started up the engine, and proceeded thereafter to gut the capture. As soon as he threw the first intestines in the water, the peace of the sea was broken, as the sea gulls came out of nowhere to share our success. Their wings covered the sky, and their screaming noises controlled the song of the sea.

Michael Szymanski

1995
In Honey

We will be
Still like living
Photographs
In your book:

lacquer and sheen,

We will each be
A stunted pupa;
A chrysalis of
Only yesterday
And gold:

fireflies in amber

We will shut up
Our eyes our mouths,
And we will be
Covered up sweetly:

covered in honey.

Lounging in the Library, 1976.



Poetry

Nancy C. Howell

Nancy C. Howell

The Channel

Dover white cliffs
Were never so
Billioned in fossil

As the nimbus of bone
Enclosing the
Dark sea of eye

Medusa's Brother

Iago has made
The room, so
Gilded of truth
A black Gorgon
Hisses a statue
To the bed
Her breath taken
By the eyes of jealousy

He cowers over
His sculpture
Blinded, begging
Hell and Perseus
For deliverance
There is a call
To soft earthlings

Ophelia's flowers
beckon on water
Juliet leaves
her dagger
Cordelia hands
a rope

Nancy C. Howell

Haskell Heights

There is no one else.
He collects loose garments
Yielded in a wanton frenzy
And with the reverence

Of an old servant
Packs the shreds away
As if the riot may be
In need after the Saturnalia

There is no one else.
He is anointed King,
Appointed in that
The dancers are unrestrained

He combs the best leaves
In December twilight
For pinning to branches
In the next season

There is no one else
And there is not hurry
The dancers will tire under
A fleshing of snow

The Technology Building opened in 1995.



Some things never change.



Fiction

Robert D. Walters

Susan E. Wood

Nancy C. Howell

Remembering the Loss of Skin

The massive farmhouse at the end of county road 600 East sits alone; neighbors are miles away in every direction. It is an island adrift in a sea of green pastures. The red paint that colors the house is faded and flaking. Bits of sun bleached paint dance with the summer breeze and are slowly put to rest among the bright flowers planted around the border of the house. In the shadow of the red house sits a frightful looking barn. Appalling and sad, it has begun to sag, kneeling to the presence of age. Tied to a rusty post outside the barn is a snarling, slobbering, lice and flea infected, saber toothed, terror inducing, cur of the canine type. He is the guard of the wet hay, the keeper of the bad, grain, the watcher of dust, decay and hundreds of field mice.

Inside the red house, inside the living room with its many windows looking out on a tranquil landscape, I rest with my grandfather in his favorite chair; my butt is planted firmly on his knee. Looking around, I notice that the room is thick with fresh flowers. Flowers are scattered around the room in all sizes of vases, glasses and coffee cans; they cram the room with their sickly sweet aroma. The flowers were brought in early this morning by Grandma, in anticipation of my arrival.

I close my eyes tight as I feel a breeze blow across my face, cooling the sweat brought by the August heat. On the tail of that puny wisp of refreshment comes a new batch of smells. The pigpen, the hint of a recent rain storm, cut grass, they all pleasure my senses. Then a smile comes and is quickly covered by my hands. I notice that when Grandma brought the flowers in this morning she forgot to remove the flakes of paint from their petals.

Opening my eyes, I look around and see my grandmother's many paintings of Christ that hang in every possible space available. My grandmother, being an extremely religious woman for almost her entire life, started her collection as a very young girl. Now, here I sit, the fear of God being shouted to me from every crevice of the room. The glory of religion and the deity was being preached to me in full color silence: The Last Supper, the crucifixion, and Jesus on tacky black velvet.

I sit with my grandfather on a large over-stuffed chair. The black leather

is ripped along one arm and its contents are spilling out in fluffy puffs of tickling white clouds.

Looking up at him from his knee, looking at him with eyes of untainted wonder, I watch his arthritic hands pinch out wads of tobacco from a red Prince Albert can. He places the dry brown leaves on a small piece of white paper; and, in one smooth movement he rolls a perfect cigarette with one hand. He brings the butt end of the smoke to his chapped lips as he slowly fishes around in the chest pockets of his bib overalls for a small rectangular box. From the box he produces a blue tip wooden match. The match sparks alive in his wrinkled hands with a simple flick of his thumb-nail.

“Well, Jesus Chri . . .”

“Shhh! Grandma might hear you.”

Grandpa wasn't as humbled by the lord as Grandma was; in fact, the only time that he used the holy name was when one of his cigarettes came unrolled and spilled smoldering particles of tobacco into his ample lap.

The door of Grandma's magic kitchen is closed, but it was open long enough for the saliva inducing fragrances to come leaping foreword. In Grandma's kitchen, there was always some kind of wonderful smell flowing sweetly from her ancient wood burning stove. The stove stood solidly on claw legs of black iron. From the heart of this beast came an unbearable heat. Several times a day, she would enter the living room all red faced with her hair sweat-pasted to her forehead, bringing tray with icy glasses of tea, the glasses dripping with condensation.

“So, what are my boys talking about?” She asks as she sits in her own chair, next to my grandpa, with an exhausted little sigh. “I was just about to ask the child when he was going to get off of his duff and come work with me in the fields.” After saying this Grandpa looked at me with his toothless grin. I only helped him on the farm once, that was some time last summer, when the potato bugs got bad and threatened to ruin his crop. He spent the entire day walking the field, checking this plants for the intruders. When he found one, he would place it in one of his empty Prince Albert cans. Every once in a while he would squash the bugs with his fingers, making an orange substance come oozing from the insects' insides with a small “pop.”

In an attempt to show my eagerness, I almost burst with excitement. The words leave my mouth in a solid lump of sound. “Icandoitnow-Grandpapleasepleaseplease!”

Once again, I receive his toothless grin. Running a hand through my thick hair, he tells me that I am not ready yet. He says that I am too soft

and young. He says to me that my father has let me become lazy and disrespectful toward hard labor. He says that, "You don't have the right kind of skin."

"The right kind of skin?" I ask.

He held one of his massive hands up to my face. It is a hand large enough to easily engulf my entire head. It is a hand large enough to deliver a great blow of pain if he so desired. That is a desire my grandpa never had. The skin of the hand is a complex design of bumps and wrinkles, callouses and scars. I run one of my pink fingers around the outline of his immense hand. The skin has a texture of leather. It was a hand that had been working longer than I had been breathing.

I ask him when I will be ready, and he tells me that my time will come when I shed my boy skin and grow into my man skin.

Since then, my boy skin has been shed and left to turn to dust in some far corner of my mind, where all things from childhood mysticism go when we are told that fantasy is no longer a required element of life. The boy skin now rests next to magic tricks and sled rides down broken neck hill. The angelic wind of an enchanted summer is left to stir the decayed remains of adolescence. Its dust settles to cover the memories of world travels taken via Radio Flyer wagons and the ability of flight when an old towel is safety-pinned around your neck.

Not long after that visit to my grandparents' house, my grandfather died from heart failure while working his field. I never had the chance to help him with his work. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had been working with him on that day that his heart had stopped. I could have gotten help; I could have held his hand one more time; I could have said good-bye.

After Grandpa passed away, Grandma wasn't able to keep up with the work that needed to be done on the farm. She was totally devastated by his leaving. I never saw her smile again after his death. I rarely even heard her speak. Never again was I blessed with the honor of tasting her incredible baked bread or her fattening cookies. Grandma decided that she didn't want to be happy anymore, and she just gave up.

Exactly one month after Grandpa's death, Grandma went to spend the rest of her time in a home where everyone else along with her had given up also, the place where people wait to die.

Ten years later I went back to the house. No one had the heart to sell it, so it just stood empty, left to the harsh elements of nature. Weeds had grown around the house waist high. The paint had faded to pink. The barn had lost its long battle with time and vandals had destroyed the house.

They had broken all of the windows, splintered most of the door, and spray-painted profanity on the outside and inside walls.

The house missed him. The wallpaper missed the smell of his hand-rolled cigarettes. The floors missed his heavy footfalls when he would pace endlessly during one of his many sleepless battles with insomnia. The windows could no longer blow around the smells of his hearty dinners. No longer will its walls absorb his jolly laughter.

When I looked down to follow the tracks of my tears, I saw the grey and splintered wooden floor soak in the moisture of my sadness almost instantly.

Symphony of Sounds

Moisture-laden density of the late summer afternoon air adheres to human flesh and elevates body temperatures like permanently attached long johns. From all except two houses on the street, the suffering majority's plight intensifies with the sounds of the jovial minority, diving and frolicking outside in their large, in-ground pools. Cooling, refreshing water invites the privileged pool people to play, while the ranks of the wretched encircle their oscillating fans or window air conditioners.

One poor procrastinator pushes his silent mower from the garage and pours petroleum into the half-filled tank. To prove that his natural internal air-conditioning system is working, beads of sweat trickle down his face to his parched, slightly parted lips, leaving an unsatisfactory salty taste in his mouth. He disappears inside, but dutifully returns to the outdoor oven and the much-avoided chore, this time equipped with a terry cloth sweatband and an icy glass of lemonade. As the glass meets his mouth, he captures a stray cube with his teeth, embracing the cooling treasure aggressively with his tongue, vigorously volleying it from taste bud to taste bud, until it melts into nothingness.

A primed pump, a full choke, and a couple of hearty rope-pulls breathe life into his two-stroke, good old Lawnboy engine, and it exhales a pollutant-laden, dark cloud of gaseous exhaust. Cranking the mower's choke back to idle, the home mechanic listens to its panting and sniffs its petrol bouquet for symptoms of illness. Satisfied with its sound and smell, he pushes the choke to the power position.

The moaning mower motor reverberates its sluggish drones like some kind of mechanical basso profundo bumblebee. Doppler dynamics vary its tone as the aged Lawnboy meanders around shrubs, statues, and hedges, indiscriminately ingesting crabgrass and clover, weed and grass, in its path. Nearby, an air conditioner compressor kicks in with a glissando up to a pitch above the mower, adding tenor to bass. The motors' dirge-like duet ironically lifts the indoor refugees' sour spirits by drowning out the pool people's partying and replacing it with the sound of someone suffering behind his mower.

Moaning motors' monotone-melodies may muffle pool noise, but they

cannot overpower Nature's choristers. Cicadas, though unseen, assert their presence with high-pitched, repetitive Do-Re whole steps. Cicadas' cricket cousins chirp along and beckon the burr of the locusts' sawmill song. Above the din of insect and turbine rings the chirping of song birds in stereo antiphon. As if to add a somber note, a lone mourning dove coos his complaining call.

In the middle of this natural-mechanical concert, a screen door slams, sending forth a streak of seven-year-old screaming energy, liberated from the confines of his house, oblivious to humidity's oppression. With the whole outdoor world before him, he twirls his young frame like a tiny tornado trying to suck all things in his path. He babbles to himself and giggles as he moves from the lawn to his bike for a daring driveway expedition. His eyes light upon a basketball that begs to be bounced. At once he dismounts and races to the ball with a delightful urgency. Now he adds a new noise to the neighborhood, with a rhythm of its own: bo-ing, bo-ing, bo-ing, on the concrete; ba-bang on the backboard. Earnestly, eagerly, patiently, he repeats the process until, at last, he sends the black-striped orange sphere through the wire rim and the white netting. His little face beams with triumph at his success, then he quits his concrete court to explore garage treasures. After finding a long-lost toy, he closes the garage as a good boy should. Suddenly, the shimmering sound of something crashing upstages natural and mechanical musicians, like a prima donna's solo entrance. An angry voice from the house demands the truth, and the dumbfounded child pleads his innocence about the broken garage door window. The boy runs, hides, cowers, and finally obeys the command to go inside. He walks slowly, dejectedly, up the steps and quietly opens the door to his prison. The mourning dove coos sympathetically.

Once again the natural-mechanical concert pervades the sound waves. Soon the mower's undercurrent ceases. The man and his old Lawnboy, both overheated, move toward the house. Seizing a garden hose, the exhausted homeowner washes clumps of dirt and clippings from the mower's body, then impishly turns the tide on himself. He eagerly takes a swig of hose water, despite its rubbery flavor. Acutely aware of the pungent smell of pure sweat emanating from his being, the man removes his dirty, wet shoes and shirt, and enters his house for cleansing and refreshment.

A partially visible sun peeks behind tall, lanky trees, like a mother making one last check on her children. Many tree branches hold dazzling white nests, with dark nuclei surrounded by cotton candylike webs. A gentle, cooling breeze carries aloft the freshly mown-grass fragrance mingled with that of burning charcoal and sizzling steaks. The deepening shadows of

evening lower the mercury, finally silencing the voice of the air conditioner compressor. For a moment, Nature directs her choristers, unimpeded by human exchange or machinery. Another distinctive insect sound emerges: the ominous noise of enemy aircraft whizzing past, eager and aggressive. The high-pitched buzz evokes anticipatory itching in human beings. Sharp fingernails try to ward-off real and imagined attacks. A slap to the leg yields a shallow success: one smashed enemy mosquito, while thousands of lively others threaten, thirsty for victory. As insect-toxic torches fail to foil the flying fighters, frail human forms flee for shelter.

From the security of their indoor refuge, alert listeners can still hear Nature's music through the night. Earlier voices rest to give night creatures their turn, while the constant cricket chirping never ceases.

On Intimate Terms

It falls through the air and grazes his shoulder. He bends to pick it up to throw to his confederates, but studies it instead. It is green and so pale it looks as if it has been dipped in cream and running off for a while. He doesn't eat it. Though the apple looks beautiful, its skin is tart and he ate enough of them this morning. Josh fondles it, then heaves it across the fence and out into the field in a defiance of strict orders, the fine articulation of generals.

There is no timely ripening of land for alien soldiers. These gathered here are generally casual to the warmth, but they are farther north now. Up here, July is a good time to throw apples not eat them, but they are a fine change from hardtack, even the beans, and shouldn't be compared to some things they are forced to eat. Good food, nor the taste of it, isn't for this soldier's army. The hunger that causes men to eat coffee grounds is almost as vicious to their insides as what grapeshot can do to their limbs. It does no good to think of the cooking back home either.

Throwing the fruit isn't an aimless gesture. It relieves the tension of waiting in this woods, a quiet place in spite of the number of men. The horses are deeper in. Some of the men are picking the thrown apples from the ground, pulling their shirts from the waistbands of their britches, and sliding them from their arms to use them to hold the fruit. They hug the apples to their bellies and run off toward the horses. Who had started the apple throwing didn't matter. It had mattered back at Sumpter but it doesn't matter now.

In war the future stands upright with the past, enigmatic bookends never quite knowing of what they will uphold until a later time when historians bracket each battle in diverse clarification. Historians make themselves privy to the thoughts of those that have been on the most intimate terms with war. It is an evolution, of calligraphy to print, from the pen to the page, striving to give death more significance with a stuttering barrage of type. Hindsight is not always the best author, but it becomes a gift to the millions who gather in the order of such circumstance.

Nate and Lew, known as Danielson and Jacobs at roll call, cross toward midnight together, blistering their tongues on a hot coal of argument.

The coal gleans its oxygen from their polar views of the battle strategy of the next day. It draws even more power from a letter Nate holds in his hand. He had shared his letter and now, was sorry that he had. "Damn you Nate! I thought you and I were on the same side!" Nate fights a reflex action of hitting back and then, of feeling his own jaw. He slides the letter into his shirt, frightened that the other boys are listening. Where is the man whose spirit was so shaken only a few hours ago? Nate forces a quieter tone, trying not to sound pleading. He gives a fast look around. "Lee is wrong. We shouldn'ta never came up this far." He looks down at the fire and whispers, "Pennsylvania! What land. I bet they're gonna outnumber us again." His eyes fasten on the flames before him, yellow tongues overlap a large blue one. His voice rises again. "We're gonna git butchered like animals!"

"Quiet!," said Lew. "Zeb and those boys are gonna string you up for all this blaspheming."

Nate puts the tips of his fingers to his eyebrows and rests his palms against his mouth. He wants to conjure some saneness for all this, just do some jaw'in about why all of them came here. He couldn't figure why they were still here after the battle notions of the last two days. He couldn't get that kind of talk from Sarah; she could only do so much, be'in so far away. He always tells her the truth. Well, most of it.

For Nate, the reasons for this war waver like the colors he is watching in the fire, shunting this way and that in the fancy of wind. He craves the distance that writing to Sarah gives him. He feels the envelope next to his body. Its four corners make him think of his thoughts sealed there. Now it seems a quiet white room. He knows he can't leave this place. He can, but only under the cover of a firing squad. He watches Lew watch him. He needs something from Lew. But he isn't sure what that is.

It will be warm today. Josh squints over at the sun. He wants to be alert, though it hadn't done anyone any good yesterday, like his friend Parker. He thought of Parker when he saw two of the boys holding each other this morning. It was the third day of fighting, but he had never seen soldiers act that way, hugging and wiping their faces on the morning of a battle. Hugging isn't for this soldier's army. Mostly, they get hollered into comfort by those wearing wide brimmed hats, yelling that they'll all go home after just one more battle. Forgetting the comfort of food or embracing, these men are hard-pressed, leaving their arms and legs nestled together in a pile for buzzards and crows to pick on. Then they're expected to go home and farm. Those two men this morning, maybe they're brothers.

At another battle, the sun had singled out each leaf of corn. They were

green blades in the morning, becoming shining swords in the overhead sun, only to turn burnished red by afternoon, when maize and men became the poor mix of fusillade. Josh had survived Antietam through the eyes of his friend Parker. Parker hadn't been there for battle either but he had passed that way going through Sharpsburg. He still fought the vision of bones flecked with meat, the putrid smell fueling the pigs into rooting them out. Parker had told him about this after much talk of bait and fish stories and why they shouldn't end their talks speaking of their mothers' cooking. He thinks of how Parker's face looked when he spoke about his folks farm with its clover fields, each flower shattering white as it was eyed by the sun.

To get through this afternoon, Josh needs to forget what happened to Longstreet's division yesterday in that peach orchard, the promise of which Parker had enjoyed. He had been carried back within sight of Josh. There had been no wish for recovery; men can't bleed like that. He had just hoped they'd find some way to get Parker back to the ground of his folk's farm.

Lew looks across the fire to Nate. Yesterday they had watched the casualties come back from the orchard planted below a rocky bluff that topped itself off across the valley and to the right of their camp. In a confounding round of numerous retreats they had seen three men carrying another man, who had become harder to grasp without his usual hold at the elbow or his catch at the foot. Jostling for the best way to carry him, a small book had dropped away from the foursome, the cover newly wet and too shiny. The men hadn't notice, so Nate had picked it up. Lew had watched him wipe it off and then had given in to something so vast that he had started shaking. He didn't cry but he allowed Nate to hold him.

Lew walks away as Nate looks around. If any of the boys heard them, they weren't letting on. There is a faint glow above each fire, lighted faces that would tear at the hearts of those who loved them. He knew that all these boys loved the old man. They would follow Lee anywhere. Anywhere. He'd find Lew in the morning. Maybe they could have grub together. Nate knows he will look him up before then. He feels his breath warm against the hands at his face.

The sun at noon is not a part of daylight but a fine suspension, a clarity of knowing nothing. Emotion is severed from motion in a nothingness that is only vandalized by the present. Josh hardly senses that there are others around him. He is looking at the Union camp on the ridge, all cannons a quiet white. He uses the moment to grasp something for holding, to prepare him for the color of this afternoon, trying not to think of his

father's voice.

He thinks about the tiny Bible that Parker had carried. He had almost run over to get it from the surgeon who had shaken his head over Parker, but thought of how Parker might need it instead. He thought of how Parker might want it; he had laid clovers in two places. He envisioned Parker's folks opening an envelope with that Bible and its two clovers pressed in it. Maybe they would try to remember the stains the fresh flowers had made on the pages and not the stains that Josh thought surely must be on its cover. The clovers were pressed flat to a burnt brown, but Parker would often take them out to sniff them saying they never lost their fine odor.

Josh likes the sound of his father's voice, especially as it sounds when he reads from the Bible. The Book of Joshua would be nice to hear, leaving him to daydream of how he could lead his fellows, as in the famous Jericho capture. The trumpets used to thrill him. These Yankees could be destroyed with just the right note. But it had taken seven days to destroy Jericho. They couldn't last seven days here, not after the last two.

Josh looks around at the boys paying attention to their clothing, and some, to their hair. They remind him of General Pickett. There is a big fuss to be in dress parade, sewing on buttons borrowed from the wounded, and taking too much time to rub down their bayonets with what grit they can find in this black soil. This fight wouldn't be if they weren't dressed in grey and brown, nor the others in blue. His mother liked to sing of a great height, and when everyone climbs naked from the valley, the hill always holds the crowd. Now Josh can't think of the tune.

It is afternoon. The barrage of fusillade is long; the argument is in motion again. There has been a storm loosed by those straddling the valley, a storm with enough powder and cannon fire to emulate creation. The dialogue is redundant but the sight inspiring, with something potent in the look of the smoke. There seems a promise in imagining the smoke from phallic cannons as the shaping of West Point egos bent on filling this valley, as new life fills a womb. But this is no show for a poet. This is a rape of flesh with metal.

Any element of surprise was lost three days ago. Josh is sitting on the ground with his head down. His face flames with blood as he thinks that all this might be different if General Lee had been Parker yesterday. He raises his head and looks around, thinking of the word ambush. That's what Joshua did at the battle of Ai, ambushing the few. But today they were the few, advancing with more than the usual, but the Yankees always had more.

Ambush. He can't stop thinking of the word. Today they were dressed

for a parade, as if marching down the busy street of Peachtree, great grey ducks in a row. He had visited his aunt in Atlanta once. He would be kicking no red dust here, only field clovers. He watches the faces around him. Their look is hard to digest. They still have faith.

He watches a grasshopper jump from his arm to his gun and start a long climb up the barrel. His shirt scratches his skin. There is a breeze as the men begin to form lines. In their movement, the trees seem more willing to advance. If only they could. He remembers something his mother has read to him, some play about a murdering king or such who was afraid to see marching trees. They could put a scare into Meade like that. Ha! Then they can eat the cattle that the Lord had promised Joshua's people, gathered from the Bible city of Ai, maybe cover our bones with meat instead of black dirt that the hogs might root in.

The dress parade is in need of breastworks. Josh stays as close as he can to his general but is blinded by the smoke. They keep beating up the small rise accompanied by screams from Yankees cutting into their right flank. He stumbles into someone and his gun explodes. This action separates him from the others and as he throws his gun from him, he feels closer to everything. The sun feints with the smoke, as his shirt slowly smoothes around him. His mother bends over the man next to him, putting her hands into his wounds to stop the bleeding. Josh moves his head nearer something. There is an apple surrounded by blue sky and his eye holds a grey-white of clover.

1996 Contributors

Kensey Alsman is working toward a degree in computer technology.

Rosella M. Fields is an avid gardener. She has lived in Valparaiso for 20 years with her husband, Ted, two teenage children, 1 mangy dog, and 4 peculiar cats. She hopes to teach chemistry and biology.

Susan K. Henriott has three children and is active in supporting sports. She will receive an associate degree in general business and continue her education in the field of sports marketing. She dedicates her *Portals* contribution to Charlie O. Finley, who passed away February 19, 1996.

Nancy C. Howell is a part-time student who enjoys writing.

Dawn M. Millsap is an English major whose future aspirations include completing a bachelor's degree in German and working as a German-English translator. She instructs a writing class for children at the Michigan City Family YMCA.

Gwen Schilling is a junior working toward her Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree. She hopes to pursue a master's degree in counseling.

Susan Wallace is a native of Maine who has also lived in Canada and relocated to Indiana in 1992. After years of community volunteer work, and operating her own business, she is majoring in English.

Robert D. Walters began his quest for knowledge at PU/NC many semesters ago. He has changed his focus several times, going from English to sociology and then to elementary education. After PU/NC he will move to New York to concentrate fully on his writing.

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